

Riding Out the Green Wave of Gentrification in Atlanta

By

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I. Introduction

This paper explores the complexities of the Atlanta Beltline project, with a specific focus on the affordable housing policy direction and how it has evolved over time. The Beltline project has generated a lot of negative publicity over the past couple of years because of the role it has played in stimulating gentrification in many of Atlanta's disinvested central neighborhoods. Ryan Gravel, who originally developed the Beltline concept in his Georgia Tech Master's thesis in 1999, imagined that the project would include the conversion of 22 miles of abandoned railroads into walking and biking trails, as well as the construction of a streetcar transit system and a variety of housing choices. Policymakers, business leaders, and the public bought into the vision, with the belief that the Beltline would truly transform the urban landscape and lead to a higher quality of life for all Atlanta residents.

In his thesis, Gravel emphasized that measures needed to be taken to ensure that the implementation of the Atlanta Beltline was an equitable development process. However, equitable development has different meanings for different people, which is evident in the fact that residents of Atlanta have various opinions regarding the outcomes they believe the Atlanta Beltline should deliver. Some people believe that 'equitable development' means that public funding should be spent equally among the geographic areas involved, while others claim that equitable development means devoting the most funding to those areas that are worst-off in terms of disinvestment and poverty levels.

In the early years of the Beltline planning process, project leaders also did not have a clear sense of what equitable development should entail. The first Beltline plan in 2005 called for the construction of 5,600 affordable housing units by 2030, but it did not include any strategies for achieving this goal. In 2009, the Atlanta Beltline Inc. released its Equitable Development

Plan, which finally defined equitable development and laid out supporting policies. However, it still lacked actionable strategies to address gentrification and the rapidly-disappearing affordable housing stock in Atlanta's central core.

As of 2016, the Atlanta Beltline Inc. had only delivered about 1,000 affordable housing units in the Beltline Tax Allocation District. When Gravel resigned from the Board of the Atlanta Beltline Partnership in 2016, the Atlanta Beltline Inc.'s lack of progress on its affordable housing goal was brought to the attention of the public. Preserving naturally-occurring affordable housing, developing new affordable housing for both renters and homeowners, and preventing displacement became major topics of concern in the 2017 mayoral race. In fact, Mayor Keisha Lance-Bottom made a campaign promise to create a one billion-dollar public-private initiative to address these affordable housing issues. A new wave of activism was unleashed, as citizens demanded more public benefits from the huge public investments associated with the Beltline.

In this paper, an evaluation technique, introduced by Susan Fainstein's "The Just City," is used to assess Atlanta's progress on its affordable housing provision goals and complimentary actions aimed at creating a city where justice can be realized. The dilemma of how to pursue sustainability and enhance public health for residents across all racial and income categories is an area of research that is lacking on the solutions-side. This paper helps to fill the gap by presenting a range of revitalization models, evaluating their effectiveness using the "Just City" lens, and making recommendations. While no city has yet found a silver bullet for addressing housing affordability, many new strategies are emerging across the country. This paper highlights successful implementation examples of strategies that focus on tenant protections, affordable housing development and preservation, and equity planning. Although the Atlanta Beltline planning and implementation process lacked a strong affordable housing agenda in the

beginning, the Atlanta Beltline Inc. and the City of Atlanta have demonstrated a renewed sense of urgency for working together to meet the growing affordable housing needs in central Atlanta neighborhoods.

II. Literature Review

A. Defining Gentrification

Gentrification has no single definition. Academics, policymakers, and the general public offer variations on the definition of the term. The term ‘gentrification’ was originally coined by a British sociologist, Ruth Glass, in a book titled, *London: Aspects of Change* (1964). Her definition introduces the important concept of displacement, which many argue is a critical component of the gentrification definition (Kennedy & Leonard 2001; Levy, Comey, & Padilla 2006). Displacement occurs when middle-income people, referred to as the “gentry,” move into disinvested areas and cause housing prices to increase, which forces the lower-income residents to leave the neighborhood. Notably, Glass (1964) recognized that gentrification not only causes the displacement of people from their homes; it can also cause small businesses to relocate. In much of the recent literature, a phenomenon known as ‘cultural displacement’ has been used to describe situations when people are not physically displaced from their homes, but their cultural identity is threatened as staples of their neighborhood, such as longstanding institutions, begin to disappear. In addition, cultural displacement can be the result of the neighborhood shifting to a less racially diverse composition (Hyra 2014). As this occurs, the people with the most political influence, typically the more affluent newcomers, gain greater say in neighborhood decision-making, further shutting out the voices of the existing residents. Hyra (2014) found qualitative evidence that cultural displacement causes existing residents to feel resentment and discouragement from partaking in local politics.

Rothenburg and colleagues (1991) set out one of the most simplified definitions of in the literature, positing that gentrification is the upgrading of a neighborhood through individual dwelling-level improvements. Property owners are likely to upgrade units when there exists a higher profit potential from selling or renting in a higher quality submarket, even after the costs of upgrading are considered. Smith (1979) refers to this concept as the rent gap theory. This idea, which stemmed from Marxism, was developed through an analysis of how capital has historically been deployed in cities. Areas where the state previously disinvested are now viewed as prime targets for redevelopment because investors can capitalize on the rent gap. This is not to say that gentrification only occurs due to redevelopment of existing properties. Investors are also prone to support new developments in disinvested areas when the market conditions reveal a profit potential (Smith 1979). Cities are not innocent in this process; they play a huge role by adopting policies that facilitate and even subsidize reinvestment in disinvested areas, which is very evident in the “back-to-the city-movement” that is occurring across the United States. The actions taken by government that stimulate this economic restructuring are referred to as “state-sponsored gentrification” (Bridge, Butler, and Lees 2012; Zuk et al. 2015).

In Rothenberg and colleagues’ book (1991), *The Maze of Urban Housing Markets: Theory, Evidence and Policy*, the concept of gentrification is illustrated through supply and demand graphs for three general housing submarkets: the low-quality submarket, the medium-quality submarket, and the high-quality submarket. It is shown that upgrading housing units in the low-quality market results in a ripple effect, causing an upward shift in the quality of the housing units in the medium- and high-quality submarkets as well (Rothenberg et al. 1991). Consequently, the supply of housing units in the low- and medium-quality submarkets decreases

as dwellings are upgraded, so prices rise. As the process continues, prices escalate quickly, and it becomes increasingly difficult to stabilize the market.

Residential development and redevelopment are not the only drivers of gentrification. Private commercial development is notorious for stimulating gentrification as new uses attract newcomers to a neighborhood. Public investments, such as infrastructure, parks, and transit, are also key contributors to property value appreciation, which many researchers use as an indicator of gentrification (Freeman 2005; Zuk et al. 2015). Public policies related to community development such as the HOPE VI public housing revitalization program and the historic tax credit program are also viewed by some as gentrification promoters (Zuk et al. 2015). Freeman and Braconi (2005) define ‘direct displacement’ as a situation where a demographic or ethnic group is succeeded by another due to a specific program. ‘Secondary displacement,’ or ‘involuntary displacement,’ refers to the common occurrence where low-income residents can no longer afford to stay in their neighborhoods because of property value appreciation or rent increases (Kennedy and Leonard 2001).

Although gentrification is not a new occurrence, its prevalence may be increasing as cities push for smart growth agendas, which entail the upgrading of land uses to their “highest and best use.” (Simpson 2017). For instance, a popular development type that planners seem to view as a panacea to a range of urban problems is the transit-oriented development, or TOD. Advocates of TODs say that situating a housing development in an area that is well-served by public transit will help expand economic opportunities for residents who do not have a vehicle. The irony is that TODs tend to be more luxurious, so low-income people who would most benefit from living in them are often excluded. Various studies demonstrate this narrative, such as Simpson’s case study on the impact of the Orange light-rail route in Portland (2017) and Jones

and Ley's account of Metro Vancouver's Skytrain Corridor (2016). These examples highlight the fallacy of the "garbage can model," devised by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972). This model of decision-making describes the case where a project concept is developed, and subsequently, the project visionaries search for a range of problems that their concept would solve.

B. Environmental Gentrification

Another common manifestation of gentrification results from the provision of green space, which has been termed 'environmental gentrification.' In the literature, many authors have discussed the paradigm shift from focusing on the distribution of "environmental bads" or "locally-unwanted land uses (LULUs)," such as landfills and chemical plants, to the spatial structure of "environmental goods" such as parks and greenways (Anguelovski 2015). Wolch and colleagues (2014) discuss this urban greening paradox, postulating that urban greening can do more harm than good in park-poor neighborhoods because these actions heighten the risk of displacement. In fact, numerous examples validate this hypothesis. Greenways in particular are bringing massive neighborhood changes in cities across the United States. Munroe, Parker, and Campbell (2016) found that property values surrounding the Catawba Regional Trail experienced appreciation, regardless of whether the housing was in the metropolitan, micropolitan, or rural context. The New York Economic Development Corporation (2011) reports that property values around the High Line rose by up to 103 percent from 2003 to 2011, despite the recession. Wolch and colleagues (2014) assert that urban greening projects such as these are closely linked to gentrification because the underlying concept of rails-to-trails projects is the upgrading of underutilized spaces; similarly, Flink (2008) describes greenways as a way of converting "urban liabilities" to "urban assets." Immergluck and Balan (2015) explain further

that greenway projects spur real estate development that appeals to people who prefer to live in a dense, walkable environment.

C. “The Just City” and Other Relevant Theoretical Frameworks

Over the last century, planning in America can be characterized by the four following themes: “City Beautiful” from 1900 to 1920, “City Efficient” from 1920 to 1960, “City Social” from 1960 to 1990, and from then to today as “City Sustainable” (Hirt 2016). As explicated in Campbell’s “Green Cities, Growing Cities, Just Cities” (1996), sustainability has always been an underlying motive of planning, but this paper was the first to break down the concept into three pillars: equity, economics, and environment. Campbell (1996) says that sustainable development rests in the center of this “Planner’s Triangle,” and it can never fully be reached; rather, planners must constantly work to resolve the conflicts between each angle. He suggests that throughout history, planners have prioritized one of these goals over the others, most frequently economic development. This idea aligns with Molotch’s theory of the ‘growth machine,’ which refers to the never-ending pursuit of growth in cities (1976). The problem with this pursuit of growth is that the benefits typically accrue to the socially elite, while exacerbating the inequality throughout the city (Loughran 2014). In Harvey’s famous “Right to the City” essay, he states that there needs to be “greater democratic control over the production and utilization of the surplus,” referring to the unequal accumulation of wealth. He discusses the intensifying power of private entities in shaping cities, such as New York, and suggests that new modes of urbanization are needed to shift power to those who have traditionally been left out of the decision-making process. Loughran (2014) discusses this theory in light of the High Line and makes the claim that this greenway is an illustrative example of the neoliberalization of public space. Gould and

Lewis (2017) refer to this phenomenon as the urban green growth machine, and they claim that public-private partnerships are often to blame for this privatization of parks.

Susan Fainstein's "The Just City" introduces the idea that planning processes that incorporate "just" principles will not necessarily yield "just" outcomes. For example, a highly participatory planning process does not automatically mean that it was inclusive of all relevant interests. In many cases, those who are inclined to participate in public meetings are middle-class homeowners who are concerned with property value impacts, and barriers may prevent lower-class individuals from partaking (Fainstein 2010). Fainstein's framework breaks down justice into three components: equity, diversity, and democracy. Equity is defined in a variety of ways—geographic equity, which refers to "a distribution of both material and nonmaterial benefits derived from public policy that does not favor those who are already better off at the beginning" (Fainstein 2010); intergenerational equity, which ensures that future generations can enjoy the same quality of life experienced today; and interspecies equity, which calls for fair treatment of all living organisms (Fainstein 2010). Fainstein's description of diversity refers to the heterogeneity of a variety of factors, such as income, educational attainment, race, age, sexuality, building and use types, economic opportunities, ease of use of different transportation modes, and more. Fainstein discusses several theories of democracy, but many revolve around the importance of meaningful citizen participation in public decision-making, as elected officials have a responsibility to hear the voices of all whom they represent. Furthermore, a democracy is meant to address the capabilities approach, meaning it must protect basic rights and ensure that all citizens have the same level of access to opportunities (Fainstein 2010).

III. Methodology

A. Data Collection Methods

Qualitative methods, including review of historic plans and other archival sources and interviews of stakeholders in the development and nonprofit communities, were used to explore Atlanta’s history and current work towards justice. Historic plans were found on the websites of the Atlanta Beltline Inc., the Atlanta Housing Authority, Invest Atlanta, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and news articles were located through reputable local news sources such as the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Interview participants were selected through research on key players driving the Beltline project and affordable housing development in Atlanta. Emails that explain the research, including its minimal risks, were used to recruit participants. In addition, a snowball sampling technique was used to identify more candidates for interviews throughout the process. In total, ten interviews of Atlanta affordable housing stakeholders, Beltline planners, and community members were conducted. Of the ten, nine were over the phone, and one was face-to-face. The face-to-face interview was recorded with permission of the interviewee, and shorthand notes were used for the phone interviews.

B. Analytical Methods and Risk-Reduction Measures

Both the historic plans and the interview notes were coded by how well the topics fit within the definitions of the three pillars of a just city—equity, diversity, and democracy. Through this categorization technique, it was easy to compare Atlanta’s progress in the three areas and to identify gaps in the Atlanta Beltline’s planning and implementation processes. The case studies and strategies presented in the “Best Practices in Affordable Housing and Community Development” section were chosen because they offer affordable housing and equity

planning tools that correct some of the identified faults in the Atlanta Beltline’s planning and implementation.

To reduce risks associated with this research, preventative measures were taken. For example, interview subjects were told that their names would not be used in the analysis. Instead, they are referred to with generic titles such as “planner,” “developer,” or “community member.” Direct quotes can pose a threat to confidentiality, so the personal communications are paraphrased and discussed thematically in the “Evaluation of Beltline Planning and Implementation Process” section. The interviews were meant to supplement the deep dive into the archives, so interview information is only integrated into the evaluation as necessary to shed light on motivations and explanations that could not be gleaned from the archival research.

IV. Background on Atlanta Beltline

A. General Atlanta Context

The City of Atlanta was born in 1837 when land surveyors recognized that it was a prime location for a railroad hub. Seven miles east of the Chattahoochee River, a place was established called ‘Terminus,’ because it was identified as the point where a rail line from Tennessee should end. After a forced removal of the Cherokee Native Americans who had originally lived on the land, new settlers flooded into the area. In 1842, Terminus was renamed ‘Marthasville,’ after Georgia Governor Lumpkin’s daughter. Three years later, it was renamed ‘Atlanta’ as a tribute to the railroad that had put the city on the map, the Western and Atlantic Railroad. In 1847, Atlanta was officially incorporated as a city, though a quite small one. A circle with a one-mile radius was drawn from the original zero milepost at Terminus to delineate the city’s boundaries (Pendergrast 2017).

Not long after the construction of the first rail line in Atlanta, three others converged at Terminus. Mills and other industries popped up around the railroads, and by 1859, the population had reached 10,000 (Pendergrast 2017). During the Civil War, Atlanta was almost entirely burned down by General Sherman, and the railroads were key to the Union victory. After the war, Atlanta branded itself as the ‘Phoenix City’ because it “rose from the ashes” as a bustling activity center, and in 1866, Atlanta was named Georgia’s capital (Pendergrast 2017). Businesses took actions to set themselves apart from the state’s Confederate history, and Henry Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, helped spread the word about Atlanta representing the ‘New South’ (Pendergrast 2017).

With investment streaming in from New England, more rail lines and later streetcar networks were built in and around Atlanta. Streetcars were originally powered by the coal-fired power plants built along the Southern Belt Line. This railroad was the first that had purposefully been built to avoid the central terminus because of its congestion; later, other “belt lines” on the northeast, northwest, and southwest were built in the same fashion (Pendergrast 2017). These are the same railroads that would one day be transformed into the Atlanta Beltline greenway trail system.

In 1901, the Locomobile became the first car to drive into Atlanta, and it did not take long for automobiles to become the preferred mode of travel throughout the city (Pendergrast 2017). In the early 1920s, traffic congestion was already one of the main topics of concern discussed by the new Planning Commission. As highways became prevalent throughout the mid-twentieth century, those with means moved away from the city center, and industries followed. In fact, in the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s 1952 report *Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta*, “suburban sprawl” was even encouraged. It also included a

proposal to convert the belt line railroads into an “Inner Belt Highway” for trucks, which points to the reality that the railroads had become obsolete. Fortunately, the Inner Belt Highway plan did not come to fruition (Pendergrast 2017).

Atlanta was at the heart of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, as Martin Luther King Jr. grew up on Auburn Avenue in a neighborhood called Old Fourth Ward, one of today’s quickly gentrifying areas near the Beltline. Some of Atlanta’s white business leaders at the time, including Coca-Cola CEO Robert Woodruff, wanted peace between whites and blacks, if not for moral reasons, for city branding purposes. In fact, the mayor at the time, William Hartsfield created Atlanta’s new slogan, “the city too busy for hate” (Ambrose & Dobbs 2017).

Meanwhile, as the Civil Rights Movement progressed, racism persisted. As in most metropolitan areas around the country, desegregation led to a mass exodus from the central city, known as white flight. Neighborhoods such as Inman Park, Grant Park, and Grove Park, which had each started off as primarily white areas, transitioned to being predominately black. A phenomenon known as ‘black flight’ was also observed, as wealthier black families made their way to the suburbs as well. Communities such as Pittsburgh, Bankhead, English Avenue, and Vine City, which had always been majority black, were left inhabited only by the poor black families that could not afford to leave (Pendergrast 2017). Though these neighborhoods were once viewed as stable black communities, they went downhill quickly as vacancies in both housing and commercial spaces were never filled and became hotspots for crime.

Beginning as early as the 1990s but accelerating today, the trend of white residents moving out of the central core of the city is reversing. Much of this growth can be attributed to the Beltline and the urban lifestyle it promises. Communities around the Eastside Trail such as Cabbagetown and Poncey-Highland have largely transitioned to upscale, white-majority

neighborhoods, while Atlanta’s westside neighborhoods are fighting to hold onto their culture and their disappearing unsubsidized affordable housing. Dr. Immergluck of Georgia State University has shown empirically that homes in historically disinvested parts of the city—the south and west sides—have experienced the largest jumps in property valuations since the Beltline project was first announced, so the low-income residents of these neighborhoods face growing displacement pressures.

Despite its efforts to promote peaceful race relations and integrated communities, Atlanta remains highly segregated by income and race. It also ranks as one of the lowest mobility metropolitan areas in the country, meaning that children who are born into poverty have a very low chance of rising above the poverty line (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2014). A report by the Brookings Institution, “Opportunity for Growth,” made the case that if Atlanta could increase its rate of upward mobility to that of Washington D.C., which is described as a “high-mobility metro,” its metropolitan Gross Domestic Product would increase by \$18 billion, which is equivalent to \$3,000 per person (Parilla 2017). The Atlanta Beltline is a key economic development strategy for addressing these challenges, but it remains to be seen how successful it will ultimately be.

B. History of Atlanta Beltline

The Beltline is within a Tax Allocation District (TAD), which is Georgia’s name for districts that uses tax increment financing. This mechanism freezes the property tax allocations so that, for example, public schools will receive the same allocation of tax revenue as they did before the project began. Then, when property values inevitably increase due to the revitalization efforts, the increment of property tax revenue above the preexisting levels would go toward financing the Beltline project. This retroactive financing is possible because the city first issues

bonds in the amount that the property tax revenue is expected to increase, and then the bondholders are repaid with the gains in tax revenue. Because of the nature of this development tool, the project leaders focused primarily on attracting luxury development because the City needed to see property values increase in order to repay the bondholders who supported the project. In other words, the state sponsored gentrification.

From the beginning, some Atlanta stakeholders were concerned about gentrification. For instance, a nonprofit called the Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Directions and Unified Policies (Georgia STAND-UP) advocated for affordable housing and the hiring of local residents for the Beltline's construction (Pendergrast 2017). Thus, the legislation for the Beltline TAD included the provision that fifteen percent of the proceeds from bonds issued to pay for the Beltline must be diverted to the City's Housing Trust Fund. The Housing Trust Fund could be used to support any affordable housing activities, such as down payment assistance and grants for development and rehabilitation.

Acquiring the right-of-way for the planned trail alignment proved challenging as the City had to negotiate with stubborn stakeholders, such as railroad owners Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, Georgia Department of Transportation, and profit-driven developers. For instance, a developer named Wayne Mason purchased a 4.6-mile rail corridor in 2004 for \$25 million. The City of Atlanta initially celebrated that a developer was interested in kicking off the redevelopment project. Soon after, though, Mason became a huge barrier for pushing forward the Beltline plan. He had his own vision, which included two high-rise apartments bordering Piedmont Park, which some consider Atlanta's equivalent to New York's Central Park. Neighborhood activists, notably from the white "Not-in-my-backyard"—NIMBY—crowd, wholeheartedly opposed the development, while poorer black residents went on record supporting the project. After years of

public criticism and a lack of City support for rezoning, Mason decided to sell the land to the Beltline Inc. for a hefty \$66 million. Because the Beltline Inc. did not have the cash on hand, it negotiated a \$45 million short-term loan directly from Mason.

The three taxing authorities, including the Atlanta City Council, Fulton County, and Atlanta Public Schools (APS), also struggled to reach agreements while drafting the legislation for the Beltline TAD. The negotiated contract between APS and the City laid out a payment plan under which the City would pay APS \$150 million, rather than a percentage of the TAD proceeds, with payments starting five years after the initial bond issuance. In addition, the City promised to deliver a new recreational facility for another \$10 million, as well as 840 housing units specifically for teachers. Any developers that received TAD funding were legally bound by this contract to pay \$25,000 to APS. Fulton County also negotiated a contract through which \$27 million of TAD funds would be allocated to the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System.

A lawsuit slowed down the TAD approval process. In 2006, John Woodham filed suit in the Fulton Superior Court, arguing that the City of Atlanta could not legally divert money from the public schools. The Fulton Superior Court ruled against him in 2007, but the Georgia Supreme Court ruled in his favor in February 2008. The City overcame this issue, though, by amending the Georgia constitution, a measure that passed in November of 2008. The City Council voted on a bond issuance in October, a risky move since the TAD's legality was still not established. The City had to act fast though, because October 31 was the deadline for repaying Wayne Mason's loan (Pendergrast 2017). Due to the recession, the bond issue raised only about \$64 million for the Beltline, which was \$55 million less than planned. Of that, \$45 million was used to cover Mason's loan, while \$8.8 million went to the Housing Trust Fund. In 2009, a new bond issuance totaled \$74.5 million, which was mostly used for refinancing the 2008 bonds.

After the recession, the Beltline area recovered quite quickly, and the Beltline Inc. started pulling their funding directly from the increasing property tax increment. However, because the TAD legislation called for a percentage of bond proceeds, rather than tax dollars, to be allocated to the Housing Trust Fund, the Beltline Inc. was not legally obligated to devote fifteen percent of its budget to affordable housing. An investigation by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* pointed out this legal loophole in 2016, explaining that the Atlanta Beltline Inc. “passed up on millions of dollars of potential funds” (Mariano et al. 2017).

More lawsuits ensued in the following years. John Woodham filed another suit concerning the City’s enactment of the TAD prior to the adoption of the constitutional amendment. This lawsuit blocked the Beltline Inc. from receiving its agreed-upon portion of school taxes up until 2011. Then, another controversy fired up between the City Council and APS in 2013. Despite APS withholding a portion of the tax increment from the TAD fund, APS filed suit when the City fell behind on its contractual repayment schedule and continued to miss payment deadlines for the next couple of years. Finally, in 2016, a new repayment schedule was negotiated, which increased the amount that the City would pay to APS overall, but the payment amounts would start off lower and increase incrementally. Both the City and APS were satisfied that the new terms decreased the uncertainty that the bonds would be repaid. The dynamic between these groups changed after this renegotiation because a trustee, rather than the City itself, is now responsible for repaying APS (Bloom 2016).

Another lawsuit, which has not been resolved to date, pitted the Atlanta Housing Authority against a development group called Integral. This group claims that the previous leadership of AHA promised them a deal on 100 acres of land, a deal which would enable them to buy land valued at \$138 million for \$17 million. The current president of AHA, Catherine

Buell, argued that allowing this transaction would go against AHA and HUD's policies, as well as the Georgia state constitution (Atlanta Housing Authority 2017).

In 2016, project leaders, including the Beltline's original visionary Ryan Gravel, resigned from the board of the Atlanta Beltline Partnership, citing equity concerns (Saporta 2016). Several articles in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported on the Atlanta Beltline Inc.'s mismanagement of funds. When the Atlanta Beltline Inc. proposed spending less than one percent of their budget on affordable housing in 2017, Invest Atlanta, the City's economic development authority, withheld approval until 2.2 million of the TAD allocation was budgeted for affordable housing (Mariano et al. 2017).

C. Impacts of Atlanta Beltline

Dr. Daniel Immergluck, a professor at Georgia State University, has conducted several sophisticated studies focused on home values in proximity to the Beltline. In one study, Immergluck (2007) analyzed how the housing market reacted to the early news coverage of the Beltline. He isolated the impact of the distance from the Beltline corridor on the surrounding residential property values by controlling for other housing and locational variables. His findings suggest that even modest coverage in the media can cause speculation (Immergluck 2007). From 2000 to 2006, the median sales prices of properties within one-eighth of a mile from the Beltline increased by more than 130 percent in some areas, particularly in southwest Atlanta. The sales price increases were similar within quarter-mile and half-mile buffers but dropped off to a lesser extent as broader buffers were analyzed (Immergluck 2007).

To demonstrate the harm that could accompany these sharp increases in property values, Immergluck presents an example of two similar homes valued at \$100,000 located at varying distances from the Beltline corridor. Based on the different rates of property value appreciation

observed one-eighth of mile from the Beltline corridor compared to one mile from the TAD, the owner within one-eighth of a mile would see their property taxes increase by 160 percent over the six-year period, while the owner one mile away from the Beltline corridor would experience property tax increases of 74 percent. With the large proportion of low-income households that reside in the areas where property values are quickly rising, Immergluck warns that displacement is an imminent threat as households are not prepared to cover increasing property taxes.

In a later study, Immergluck and Balan (2015) carry out the same type of hedonic analysis, and they find that that the median sales price of properties within one-half mile from the Beltline corridor increased between 40 to 68 percent from 2011 to 2015 (Immergluck & Balan 2015). Meanwhile, the median sales price of properties outside the half-mile buffer only rose by about 17 percent. Again, Immergluck discusses the results in terms of property taxes, but with the additional complexity of considering homestead exemptions. Because of Atlanta's \$30,000 homestead exemption, when a property valued at \$100,000 appreciates by 50 percent, the resulting property taxes would triple (Immergluck & Balan 2015). The following table illustrates this point. Immergluck uses this example to show that low-income households are hurt the most from rapid property appreciation (Immergluck & Balan 2015).

Table 1. Expected Impact of \$100,000 Home Appreciating by 50 Percent on Property Tax

	2011	2015
Fair Market Value of Home	\$100,000	\$150,000
Assessment ratio	40%	40%
	\$40,000	\$60,000
less homestead exemption (\$30,000)	(\$30,000)	(\$30,000)
Taxed Amount	\$10,000	\$30,000
Tax (millage) rate, all units of government	0.0430	0.0430
Estimated Annual Tax bill	\$430	\$1,290

Source: Immergluck, D., & Balan, T. (2015). An Analysis of Home Price Trends near the Atlanta Beltline, 2011 to 2015. Urban Studies, 46, 1723–1745. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009105500>.

V. Evaluation of Beltline Planning and Implementation Process

A. Equity

1. Planning Process

From its conception, the Atlanta Beltline has been framed as an equitable public health solution to many of the city's problems. According to the Beltline's Equitable Development Plan, "equitable expands beyond equal treatment, and focuses on effectively meeting the needs of the diverse groups of individuals and communities that share the Beltline, enabling all areas to experience healthy growth" (Atlanta Beltline Equitable Development Plan 2009).

Atlanta grew rapidly during the 1990s, and the growth continued to pick up pace into the next century. Prior to the announcement of the Beltline project, though, growth was mainly concentrated in the north and northeastern parts of the city. As such, wealth accumulated in these areas as investment poured into them, and other parts of the city were largely ignored. This narrative was introduced in the 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan as a way of setting the stage for a huge shift in development patterns. According to this plan, the Beltline is a way to promote economic development equitably throughout the city, including investment in affordable housing, transportation improvements, workforce training, and open space provision (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005).

The major topic of discussion in the Redevelopment Plan is the use of a Tax Allocation District to fund the Beltline project, from its housing and public service investments to the trail and transit infrastructure construction. Though 'workforce housing' is referenced throughout the plan, the section of the plan purely devoted to this important topic is a mere three paragraphs. It sets the expectation that 20 percent of residential units built in the Beltline Redevelopment Area would be affordable. This is contradicted later in the plan, though: it says that the Beltline

Redevelopment Area would include 50,000 new housing units by 2030, yet the affordable housing goal was only set at 5,600 housing units, just over 10 percent of the total residential construction. The Redevelopment Plan (2005) defines workforce housing as rental units affordable to households making up to 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) and ownership units affordable to households making up to 100 percent AMI. Had there been any analysis of the existing income ranges of the populations residing in the Beltline neighborhoods, the planners may have realized that this definition was inadequate for protecting the existing residents from displacement.

The Redevelopment Plan (2005) also fails to discuss strategies for how to meet the workforce housing goal. Table 7.1 of the plan introduces the activities that are eligible for TAD funding, how much TAD funding should be budgeted for each, as well as additional sources of funding. For workforce housing, it is estimated that \$220 to \$260 million dollars would be needed. The table denotes that all of this funding would come from the TAD, and no additional sources of funding are cited (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). For most of the other initiatives, especially those related to transportation, multiple sources of funding are included. Although much of the analysis in this plan is geared toward transportation rather than housing, many questions are left unanswered. The plan admits that transportation cost estimates are the most uncertain because the transit mode and alignment had not been decided. In fact, these questions are still up in the air today.

Despite these deficiencies, the Redevelopment Plan does have some redeeming qualities in terms of equity planning. It does acknowledge that coordination with housing partners such as the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, City of Atlanta, local CDCs, the Enterprise Foundation, and the Atlanta Renewal Community CoRA Inc. would be crucial (Atlanta Beltline

Redevelopment Plan 2005). It also includes a \$100-million budget item for “incentives,” and the project team recommends that these funds only be tapped in “areas of unusual physical challenge and market distress, including portions of the southeast, southwest and northwest areas” (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). The boundaries of the proposed Beltline Tax Allocation District were also specifically drawn to exclude single-family neighborhoods and “protect the integrity of the residential fabric,” and compatibility of new development with the surrounding areas is touched on multiple times (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). Additionally, the plan notes that residential and business relocation is not expected by the project, but tenants would be fairly compensated in the case that relocation was necessary (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005).

Finally, a couple safeguards are included to protect Atlanta residents from burdensome tax increases. First, the plan mentions that the City cannot raise the tax rate if the TAD increment does not meet projections; rather, debt service reserves and excess reserve coverage are proposed as backup sources (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). Secondly, the Georgia Redevelopment Powers Law includes a provision that that only ten percent of a city’s eligible tax base can go into TADs (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). This precautionary provision is commendable because it ensures that the City can maintain a healthy fiscal balance necessary to carry out its functions and protect the welfare of all of its residents. Prior to the Beltline TAD adoption, existing TADs comprised 5.6% of the eligible tax base, so the addition of the Beltline TAD, which made up 2.7% of the tax base, was legal since the City would still have less than 10 percent of its tax base wrapped up in TADs.

2. Implementation Process

i) Equitable Funding

Many critics of the Beltline's implementation have spoken out about the inequitable distribution of funding between the Beltline's four quadrants during the early years. In fact, the Beltline Equitable Development Plan is forthcoming about these inequities, as it reports that of the total \$291 million spent in 2009, 45 percent was allocated to the Northeast quadrant; 22 percent was allocated to the Northwest quadrant; 14 percent was allocated to the Southeast quadrant; 9 percent was allocated to the Southwest quadrant; and about 10 percent could not be attributed geographically. The explanation given for these disparities was that acquisition of the right-of-way of the Northeast section was more expensive than expected after all of the negotiations with the stubborn developer Wayne Mason (Atlanta Beltline Equitable Development Plan 2009).

The 2006-2010 Five Year Plan budgeted \$42 million for affordable housing in the first five years, yet less than \$20 million were earmarked for affordable housing in that time. As described in the "History of Atlanta Beltline" section above, there are many reasons that affordable housing was underfunded in the early years, namely the recession, multiple lawsuits, and the legal loophole in the TAD legislation. Another explanation is that the Atlanta Beltline Inc. did not have a clear direction for its housing initiatives, given the lack of implementation planning in the workforce housing section of the 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan. Terri Montague, the founding President and CEO of the Atlanta Beltline Inc., believed that trail construction should not begin until the entire 22-mile corridor had been designed and approved. She also spoke out against building the Eastside Trail first, as it "would appear racially and economically inequitable" (Pendergrast 2017).

However, the Atlanta Beltline Inc. faced mounting pressure from its private partners to construct the Eastside Trail after the land had been acquired from Wayne Mason. Montague initially pushed back when the Atlanta Beltline Inc. Board decided to move forward with the Eastside trail development. Through negotiations, she convinced the Board to allocate more funding to revitalization efforts in south Atlanta as an attempt to counterbalance the amount of money that would be spent on the Eastside trail.

ii) *Transit versus Housing*

To ensure that the Eastside trail could one day accommodate transit, the Atlanta Beltline Inc. spent exorbitant amounts of money on the engineering work required to design a transit-friendly corridor. Ed McBrayer of the PATH Foundation opposed this overstretching of funds, claiming that it would have been a more responsible funding choice to construct a bike and pedestrian trail in the middle of the corridor and to come back to the streetcar concept once the money and studies supported it (Pendergrast 2017).

One of the problems to which McBrayer alluded was that Georgia Tech professors from the Department of City and Regional Planning, as well as other transportation professionals, wrote a white paper that criticized the Beltline's lack of ridership studies. They said that it would be a poor use of public funding to plan for streetcar on the Beltline because it lacked the density of jobs that can sustain a transit system. Although the Beltline is an economic development engine that creates jobs, these professors did not think the jobs would be concentrated in enough nodes for streetcar to be a viable investment—they said that it would not work because “it’s all origins and no destinations” (Pendergrast 2017). Meanwhile, Ryan Gravel, the Beltline visionary from Georgia Tech, and perhaps more importantly, prior Mayor Shirley Franklin, firmly held onto the idea that the Beltline should eventually incorporate a transit component (Pendergrast

2017). From Gravel's perspective, transit is crucial for expanding opportunity to disabled and handicapped people who receive no benefit from the walking and biking trails (Gravel 2014). Other urbanists argue that affordable housing is not truly affordable if it does not account for the affordability of transportation options needed to get to work.

Transit on the Beltline is still heavily debated today, even though a special purpose local option sales tax to fund expansion of MARTA recently passed with a huge margin. City leaders are still discussing what that expansion will look like, and whether it will include streetcar on the Beltline. Mike Dobbins, one of the Georgia Tech professors who has historically vocalized his opposition to transit on the Beltline, wrote another paper in 2016 titled, "Transit Planning 101 for the City of Atlanta: It's Not Too Late." In it, he advocated for improvements to the existing MARTA system, rather than the creation of a streetcar network on the Beltline. He noted that the city already lacks transit accessibility to major job centers, such as the airport, Perimeter Mall, and the Buckhead business district. He also brought up the idea of expanding the City's existing streetcar from downtown to Ponce City Market, which has become a major destination on the Beltline. While this may be a way for the City to "make good" on its downtown streetcar investment, which has had very little ridership since its conception in 2010. Dobbins pointed out that this would result in even more of the Beltline's funding being skewed toward the eastside, again accentuating the project's inequities (Dobbins 2016).

Given this conundrum, Atlanta Beltline Inc. CEO Brian McGowan mentioned informally that he thinks it is important to consider alternatives to streetcar, such as bus rapid transit ("Brian McGowan Ask Me Anything" Event 2017). With limited funding from the federal and state levels, bus rapid transit may be the most cost-efficient and equitable strategy moving forward, but it will require deep consensus building with City agencies and other various stakeholders

who have fought for streetcar over the years. The Beltline Inc. must grapple with whether streetcar transit is still a major priority, or if the mission of the Beltline has evolved. Given public outcries over Atlanta's worsening affordability, it seems that attacking affordability issues head-on should be the first and greatest priority of the Atlanta Beltline Inc.

iii) Revitalization Models

1. Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative and its Evolution

The Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (ALTC) incorporated in 2009 as community groups, private companies, nonprofits organizations, philanthropic foundations, university researchers, and public agencies came together to address the gentrification concerns generated by the Atlanta Beltline. Modeled after a similar approach taken by the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, the ALTC organized as a “central server community land trust,” meaning it was meant to be an overarching entity that could provide funding and technical assistance to smaller, neighborhood-based community land trusts (CLTs). The CLT model is supposed to yield permanent affordable homeownership opportunities, as the CLT retains ownership of the land while offering a ground lease to its members. With a resale formula, the CLT controls the amount of equity to be gained upon sale so that homes can remain affordable for the next household in need.

Though the ALTC was touted as the Atlanta Beltline Partnership's “solution” to gentrification, the Partnership raised very little funds to support the venture in its early days. In fact, the ALTC only directly financed the preservation of three properties at the Lofts at Reynoldstown (HUD USER #1). The ALTC also provided technical assistance to smaller, neighborhood-based CLTs, and these CLTs are credited with preserving the affordability of approximately 118 housing units since 2009 (HUD USER #1). For instance, the Pittsburgh

Community Improvement Association experimented with the CLT model, and it had mixed results. Attaining loan financing proved challenging as many banks did not see the value in homes that would only be marketed at \$80,000 (Baldwin 2016). Compared to the rest of the Pittsburgh neighborhood, the land trust properties were overpriced. The Pittsburgh community was hit hard by the Recession, as it experienced the greatest rate of mortgage fraud in the country and its average housing values dropped from about \$85,000 in 2006 to \$13,000 in 2012 (Torpy, 2014). In addition, the poor neighborhood upkeep and notorious crime in the area did the opposite of drawing in newcomers.

Pendergrast (2017) discusses the irony that the Beltline is somewhat responsible for stifling this neighborhood's revitalization, as absentee owners are holding onto vacant properties with hopes that the Beltline will eventually cause property values to rise. Since these owners have put no money into improving their properties, there has been little interest from other investors to clean up the neighborhoods.

Community organizations and Atlanta-based foundations are actively working to improve conditions in Pittsburgh, though, by forming a joint venture called the Partnership for the Preservation of Pittsburgh (Youngblood & Barnette 2011). With technical assistance from Georgia Tech and Emory students, the PCIA has not given up on the CLT model (AECF 2012). By creating a "Preservation of Pittsburgh Master Plan" in 2012, the residents have expressed support for revitalization, as greater access to economic opportunities is greatly needed. This plan highlights the neighborhood's assets that need to be preserved, while also pointing out areas that need improvement, especially with regards to transportation connectivity and environmental cleanup. Though the PCIA still must contend with absentee owners, it has had some success with repairs that bring homes up to code, as well as public space improvement projects such as

community gardens and murals (AECF 2012). Some remaining challenges include overcoming the negative perceptions associated with the neighborhood and building neighborhood services such as grocery stores since the zoning code prohibits these kinds of uses (Hoffman 2016). Residents in the neighborhood are encouraged to advocate for the changes they would like to see through their formal Neighborhood Planning Unit-V. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Partnership for Southern Equity launched a program in 2018 to boost civic participation by creating a training program called “Resident Leaders for Equity” (AECF 2018).

In multiple interviews conducted for this analysis, Atlanta planners and developers acknowledged that the Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative has essentially fizzled out, and the entity’s name has changed to the Atlanta Land Trust (Personal Communications 2017-2018). Though it has yet to be seen how this change will affect the implementation of new land trust properties, a conclusion can be drawn that a new organizational structure was needed to promote collaboration and leverage funds in a more productive manner.

2. Historic District Development Corporation

The Old Fourth Ward neighborhood, the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is one of the Beltline’s claims to fame for revitalization. However, community-based efforts have been underway long before the Beltline, specifically in the part of the neighborhood characterized as the Sweet Auburn Historic District. Because Auburn Avenue was once considered “the richest Negro street in the world,” the surrounding neighborhood was designated as the Sweet Auburn Historic District in order to preserve the cultural heritage while restoring the economic activity (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2018).

In 1980, Coretta Scott King founded the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC) to promote neighborhood revitalization efforts driven by a community advisory group.

This Community Engagement Committee has a mission of implementing Dr. King’s “Beloved Community” philosophy, under which people come together despite differences and recognize their shared humanity (Historic District Development Corporation 2018). With the Community Engagement Committee’s assistance, the HDDC nonprofit ran a successful “block-by-block” strategy to develop infill homes and restore existing properties without displacing the existing residents. In the late 1990s, though, some homeowners sold their properties to affluent newcomers for great profits (Pendergrast 2017). The HDDC quickly learned that affordability mechanisms were needed. They started placing covenants on the properties’ deeds, which set out rules regarding subsidies. The HDDC would provide these subsidies under the condition that they must be paid back if the home is sold within five years (Pendergrast 2017). Mtamanika Youngblood, one of the HDDC’s leaders, went on to serve on the board of the Atlanta Beltline Partnership, and she was one of the major advocates for affordability provisions in the Tax Allocation District legislation (Pendergrast 2017).

The HDDC’s efforts have resulted in a more stable residential neighborhood. However, the once-thriving commercial corridor on Auburn Avenue is still not what it used to be. In 2013, a nonprofit called Sweet Auburn Works incorporated as the entity that would lead the preservation-focused commercial revitalization process, including the strategic planning and fundraising (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2018). In 2017, the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced its African American Cultural Heritage Fund, which is “the largest preservation campaign ever undertaken on behalf of African American history,” according to its website (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2018). In addition, the National Trust plans to open an office on Auburn Avenue, which could help strengthen preservation efforts in the area (Saporta 2017).

3. Purpose Built Communities

Purpose Built Communities is a nationally-renowned nonprofit that has championed a model of revitalization that has proven effective in communities across the country. Its founder, Tom Cousins, first tested the model with the revitalization of the Eastlake community in Atlanta. Built on the pillars of mixed-income housing, cradle-to-college education, and community wellness, Purpose Built Communities improves quality of life in a variety of realms.

Since the success at Eastlake, Cousins expanded the reach of Purpose Built Communities. Thirteen neighborhoods across the country are part of the Purpose Built network. To join the network, a local organization, referred to as the “community quarterback,” must unite other local organizations under a common mission. Purpose Built Communities provides consulting services to the local partners, who are then responsible for doing the groundwork.

In 2017, the Grove Park Foundation joined the Purpose Built Communities network. Grove Park is a historic neighborhood located in Northwest Atlanta that experienced a similar fate as the Old Fourth Ward, where flight of both affluent whites and blacks caused the once-prosperous economic center to decline. Building on prior efforts by the Emerald Corridor Foundation to improve environmental conditions along Proctor Creek, the Grove Park Foundation was founded to drive holistic community revitalization. Some of the accomplishments of the Grove Park Foundation thus far include securing funding from Atlanta Public Schools for the construction of a new academy for kindergarten through eighth grades and partnering with the YMCA of Metro Atlanta to build a new wellness and early childhood intervention center next to the new academy. In order to promote housing stability, the Grove Park Foundation has worked to educate residents on their rights and the resources available to them, and it connects those in need of representation with the pro-bono services offered by the

Atlanta Volunteer Lawyer's Foundation. The Grove Park Foundation also promises to construct 100 new mixed-income housing units by 2019. Other ongoing efforts include collaborating with Callanwolde Fine Arts Center to boost arts education and bringing the "Soccer in the Streets" program to Grove Park, which is a soccer program devoted to instilling leadership and teamwork values in Atlanta's underserved youths.

Another organization, Purpose Built Schools, grew out of the Purpose Built Communities concept. Purpose Built Schools, which consists of a team of educators and community-based developers, works to diagnose issues with underperforming public schools and introduce new teaching models. Purpose Built Schools, the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, and Atlanta Public Schools recently announced an initiative to explore the suitability of kids' housing conditions, with the intent of connecting families with assistance (English 2017).

4. Westside Community Benefits Plan

The Westside Community Benefits Plan was developed as a condition of the approval for the massive Mercedes-Benz Stadium built in proximity to some of Atlanta's poorest neighborhoods in 2017. Notably, this plan is not a binding Community Benefits Agreement, so nothing in the plan is legally required to be implemented. However, Arthur Blank, the co-founder of Home Depot and owner of the Atlanta Falcons, has expressed, "It's not about how many buildings you build, but how you change the quality of life of the people living there," and his financial contributions to the Vine City, English Avenue, and Castleberry Hill neighborhoods have already been significant. As laid out in the Westside Community Plan, the Arthur Blank Foundation would donate \$15 million to the Westside Neighborhood Prosperity Fund, and Invest Atlanta would match the donation by designating the Westside Tax Allocation District (Westside Community Benefits Plan 2013). The recommendations of the plan include creating a job

training center called Westside Works, starting business and arts incubators, investing in various educational initiatives, implementing a range of affordable housing strategies such as land banking and tax abatements, and exploring different community beautification projects such as transportation improvements and environmental remediation (Westside Community Benefits Plan 2013).

Westside Works, which has already come to fruition, boasts on its website that it is a “long-term neighborhood program focused on creating employment opportunities and job training for the residents of the Westside community” (Westside Works 2018). In its first year of operations, it placed 458 residents into full-time jobs, in the fields of construction, culinary, nursing, and information technology (Westside Works 2018). Beyond the Blank Foundation and Invest Atlanta, Westside Works also partners with the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia, Integrity Community Development Corporation, the Center for Working Families, Inc., Per Scholas, Metro Atlanta YMCA, and the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (Westside Works 2018). Hopefully this deep level of involvement with a number of community organizations will hold Westside Works accountable for continuing its efforts for the long run, as its website claims.

Called to action by previous mayor Kasim Reed in 2014, a coalition of private CEOs and nonprofit leaders known as the Atlanta Committee for Progress created the Westside Future Fund. This new nonprofit organization engaged with the westside communities and developed a Land Use Framework Plan. Affordable housing is prioritized in this plan, as it calls for 20 percent of all new housing units to be set aside for households with incomes between \$14,000 and \$24,000 (Westside Land Use Framework Plan 2017). The Westside Future Fund has already taken huge measures to protect existing residents with its Anti-Displacement Tax Fund. This

protection is a property tax circuit breaker program, which essentially means that if the ratio of property taxes to household income rises above a certain level, the Westside Future Fund will cover the portion of property taxes that is unaffordable to the qualified households (Westside Future Fund 2018). In addition, the Westside Future Fund recently launched a “renter-to-homeowner” initiative, which involves the purchase and rehabilitation of existing properties to enable perpetual affordable homeownership opportunities. The Westside Future Fund made its first real estate investment for this program in February 2018. With support from Invest Atlanta, the Atlanta Police Foundation, Pulte Homes, and philanthropists, the Westside Future Fund is moving forward with the rehabilitation of 51 housing units, to be sold at an affordable price to “legacy renters,” meaning long-term community members who need assistance such as police officers, seniors on fixed incomes, and others who work full-time for minimum wage (Westside Future Fund #2 2018). Another new initiative is the Westside Future Fund’s Data Dashboard, which presents baseline data, and will continue collecting data, in the categories of safety and security, health and wellness, mixed-income communities, and cradle-to-college education (Westside Future Fund #3 2018). Some other achievements of the Westside Future Fund include the development of the “On the Rise” Financial Center, the creation of the Westside Volunteer Corps, and the implementation of the At-Promise Center for youth crime diversion which has already cut crime rates by 35 percent (Westside Future Fund 2018).

Though many positive outcomes have already come out of the Westside Community Benefits Plan, some residents remain concerned about gentrification, and many are doubtful that the Blank Foundation will sustain its financial support after the recommendations of the Community Benefits Plan are carried out. One community member said that the Westside is no stranger to revitalization initiatives that become unfulfilled promises (Personal Communication,

2018). For instance, over \$100 million has been invested in Atlanta's Westside since the Olympics, yet blight conditions remain with nearly 40 percent of the housing stock vacant and half the school-aged population dropping out of high school (Pendergrast 2017). Only time will tell if the Westside Community Benefits Plan will truly create long-term solutions.

iv) Atlanta's New Policy Direction

In 2016, an inclusionary ordinance was passed that requires any developers who receive government subsidies to set aside either fifteen percent of the total units for those making 80 percent of the area median income or ten percent of the total units for those making 60 percent of the area median income. Former Beltline Inc. President Paul Morris was fired, and an experienced affordable housing financier Brian McGowan was appointed for the position. The City of Atlanta also passed a new bond referendum, so the fifteen percent set-aside for the Housing Trust Fund was reestablished.

The inclusionary zoning ordinance was strengthened as of November 2017, as it now requires all rental multifamily developments with ten or more units in the Beltline Overlay District or the Westside Overlay District to include affordable housing set-asides, regardless of the receipt of public subsidies (Green 2018). This mandated inclusionary housing program also allows the developer to select three of the following four incentives: a 15 percent density bonus, a reduction in parking, priority application review, or "major project" designation which expedites the meeting schedule with department representatives during the development application process (Green 2018).

Another major affordable housing win for the City occurred in the spring of 2017 when City Council unanimously passed the Housing Opportunity Bond. During Shirley Franklin's tenure as Atlanta's mayor, the City authorized a total of \$75 million of bonds for affordable

housing. The first bond issue totaled \$35 million in 2007, and this second issue, which occurred in May 2017, comprised the remaining authorized \$40 million (Anderson 2017). Notably, this second installment of the Housing Opportunity Bond included more specific language than the first installment, which was directly attributable to advocates pushing for inclusion of groups who are most in need of housing. In particular, these include renters making up to 60 percent AMI and homeowners making up to 80 percent AMI, especially the most vulnerable owners including seniors, disabled, and veteran headed households (Anderson 2017). Comparatively, the first bond called for workforce housing initiatives for the benefit of households making up to 120 percent AMI (Anderson 2017).

Though it is still very early in her tenure, Mayor Keisha Lance-Bottom seems to be taking seriously her campaign promise of a billion-dollar public-private investment in affordable housing. Branding the effort as “Atlanta: A City for All,” the Mayor’s new Housing Commission hopes to build off the Atlanta City Design plan and leverage support from various players from the public and private sectors (City for All 2018).

Atlanta was selected in 2016 as one of six cities across the country to participate in the Strong, Prosperous, and Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC), which is a 90 million-dollar initiative that provides grant funding and technical assistance to the selected cities. The Transformation Alliance, which is a team of 17 governmental, philanthropic, and nonprofit organizations, was born through SPARCC. Its mission is to promote “equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD)” and “racial equity” initiatives in Atlanta (Atlanta Regional Commission 2018). The Atlanta Regional Commission and Enterprise Community Partners lead this coalition. Their focus brings together housing and transit, as various studies have documented that these two costs are holding back Atlanta residents; the Transformation Alliance reports that 80 percent

of Atlanta's populations spends more than 45 percent of their income on combined housing and transportation costs (Transformation Alliance 2018).

Working directly with the Transformation Alliance, the Mayor's Housing Commission developed ten guiding principles, which are divided into the following categories: production, inclusion, protection, and preservation. Under production, the City for All team identified working with public agencies such as Atlanta Public Schools, the Atlanta Housing Authority, and MARTA to reclaim underutilized spaces and blighted properties and convert them to affordable housing. Each of these entities already has their own affordable housing policies. For instance, Atlanta Public Schools recently convened an Affordable Housing Task Force to develop recommendations on how to adapt their 70 underused properties for affordable housing purposes (English 2017). Additionally, Atlanta Public Schools and the other taxing authorities, the City of Atlanta and Fulton County, aid the Atlanta Land Bank Authority with acquiring tax-delinquent properties and conveying them to local community development corporations (HUD USER 2009). The Atlanta Housing Authority has also moved forward with affordable housing adaptive reuse initiatives, including a new plan to redevelop the Atlanta Civic Center for low-income housing. In 2014, MARTA adopted "TOD Guidelines," which among other strategies, include offering 99-year ground leases on MARTA-owned lots with the condition that developers include 20 percent affordable housing (Jaffe 2014). This policy and the efforts by the Transformation Alliance have already resulted in several "ETOD" sites going up around the City.

To catalyze the 'equitable transit-oriented development' mission to an even greater extent, the City for All team is considering a "Livable Transit Fund," which will dedicate a portion of the T-SPLOST (a special purpose local option sales tax to expand MARTA which

passed in 2016) exclusively to transit-oriented developments. The Atlanta Regional Commission has identified “Equitable Target Areas” for these developments, based on a half-mile walking distance from existing MARTA stations. If the Livable Transit Fund is approved, MARTA will become more competitive in securing funding from the Federal Transit Administration’s “New Starts” program, which rewards agencies that score high on its “social equity criteria.”

MARTA’s affordable housing policy, as well as its goal of hiring 30 percent of its contractors from Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, also comply with these criteria (City for All 2018).

City for All’s recommendations under the next guiding principle, inclusion, include expanding the inclusionary zoning ordinance to a citywide level and directing public subsidies to households making up to 60 percent AMI (City for All 2018). City for All’s website also references the Atlanta Community Engagement Playbook, which was assembled by the Westside Future Fund, the City of Atlanta, and the Atlanta Housing Authority, with extensive input from community members from the westside neighborhoods over an 18-month period. The Playbook contains a range of strategies for meaningfully engaging communities and maintaining strong relationships (Atlanta Housing Authority, City of Atlanta, & Westside Future Fund 2017).

Protection, City for All’s next guiding principle, refers to helping at-risk communities avoid displacement. Atlanta made news headlines in 2017 for having one of the highest eviction rates in the country—in some neighborhoods, this rate was measured at 40 percent (Rhone 2017). Some strategies proposed by City for All to address this issue include circuit breaker property tax programs and homestead exemptions, as well as providing funding to organizations who provide resources to low-income households (City for All 2018).

With regards to its preservation goals, the City for All coalition recommends community land trusts and other shared equity models, as well as owner-occupied rehabilitation loans and

lease-purchase programs. JP Morgan Chase has invested heavily in affordable housing preservation in Atlanta. In 2016, it sponsored an Atlanta Preservation Challenge. The winner of the challenge, Tapestry Development Group, proposed providing low-interest loans and construction management services to multifamily owners for rehabilitation, with the condition that the owners must “lock in current affordability levels” during the loan repayment period (Spotts & Abu-Khalaf 2017). In a similar vein, Chase launched the Equity Atlanta Collaborative, which will provide loan capital to both affordable housing and small business initiatives in targeted areas (ANDP Inc. 2016). Finally, Chase recently supported Enterprise Community Partners’ creation of an “Affordable Housing Capacity Accelerator Program,” which will provide technical assistance to seven community development corporations in Atlanta (Enterprise Community Partners 2018).

B. Diversity

1. Planning Process

Discussion of race and its impact on Atlanta’s development patterns is noticeably lacking in the 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan. While Ryan Gravel devoted an entire section of his thesis to the sociopolitical shaping forces of Atlanta’s history, very little of this account made it into the first official Beltline plan. Rather, this plan was more focused on the funding behind the Beltline project. The closest this plan came to acknowledge the unequal opportunities experienced by different racial groups was in its description of Georgia’s Redevelopment Powers Law, which sets out criteria for areas that are eligible to be included in Tax Allocation Districts. These include the presence of substandard or aging building structures, inadequate transportation facilities, deficient open space, and negative environmental features such as sources of pollution (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). Though it points out that the City’s stock of

naturally-occurring affordable housing is largely located in proximity to the Beltline industrial areas, this plan does not make clear that environmental justice is a major concern.

However, in 2009, Atlanta Beltline Inc. adopted an Environmental Justice Policy that affirmed that it was committed to “fair treatment of people of all races, age, cultures and incomes” (ABI 2009). Through this policy, the Atlanta Beltline Inc. also committed to transparency with identified development impacts, and it promised to take actions to mitigate harms to environmental justice communities.

The 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan recognized that a varied economy was an essential ingredient for effective redevelopment. The redevelopment area consisted of a broad range of building types, making it “unlike any other network of urban space in the country” (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). To celebrate this uniqueness and rejuvenate the economy, the Redevelopment Plan encouraged adaptive reuse of underused buildings, especially through rehabilitation that make the buildings more sustainable. The 2005 Beltline Community Benefits Resolution set out the importance of green buildings, as they are beneficial not only for the environment, but also for stimulation of the green economy. The Redevelopment Plan also called for a reduction of land use conflicts, such as close siting of industrial and residential uses. While industrial businesses once dominated the area, the decline of some of these industries resulted in a need to diversify. The Redevelopment Plan promoted light industrial developments that would be more compatible with residential uses, as well significant amounts of retail and office development.

The Beltline Equitable Development Plan built on the economic goals presented in the Redevelopment Plan. The Beltline is projected to create 48,000 construction jobs, so the Equitable Development Plan instituted a first source jobs policy to ensure that these jobs benefit

people who live in proximity to the Beltline. The City also imposed a requirement that 27 percent of contractors hired to work on the Beltline must be disadvantaged business enterprises, defined as women-owned or minority-owned businesses (HUD USER #2 2018).

The transportation and environmental improvements recommended by the 2005 Redevelopment Plan were geared toward expanding access to parks and trails, especially for a broad range of users. For instance, roadway improvements including bicycle and pedestrian interventions will diversify Atlanta's transportation mode share. All new trails and parks would be designed to meet standards required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, the Redevelopment Plan pointed out that many spaces surrounding the Beltline were built with odd industrial design patterns, so retrofits would be necessary to bring them into compliance with ADA (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005). The neighborhoods surrounding the Beltline also lacked public open space usable for community gatherings, so the Redevelopment Plan mentioned that these would be integrated throughout the area (Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan 2005).

2. Implementation Process

In Gravel and Smith's joint resignation letter to the Atlanta Beltline Partnership, they wrote, "We believe that the primary accountability for the Atlanta Beltline is not to private funders, civic partners, or to organizational leadership, but to the people of Atlanta who have given the most to make the project possible. If they had not believed in a vision for our future, and if they had not worked so hard and insisted on its implementation, we certainly would not be building it today. In fact, if not for the underserved, 'blighted' communities of south and west Atlanta, the Tax Allocation District would not have been allowed under state law and the idea would be gathering dust on a shelf" (Saporta 2016). This quote highlights the underlying

question: who is the Beltline is for, and does it provide spaces that are culturally relevant to these populations?

In a study titled “Urban Greenway Use and Benefits in Diverse Cities: A Tale of Two Trails,” evidence shows that discrepancies exist between the racial composition of the Atlanta Beltline Eastside Trail’s users and the respective racial composition of Atlanta; for example, during three months of observations at varying times of day, it was found that 13 percent of the trail users were black, while Atlanta’s population is about 54 percent black (Keith et al. 2016). This study included a methodologically-sound survey instrument to identify trail users’ preferences and perceptions. One interesting finding was that trail users who identified as a race other than white or black had a statistically-significant higher perception of crime on the trail (Keith et al. 2016). Hopefully that perception will change through education and interaction with police officers in the community. Atlanta was recently awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Community-Oriented Policing Hiring Services program, which will allow the Beltline Path Force to expand by fifteen officers (ABI 2017). It is the policy of the Atlanta Police Department to hire a force that is representative of the community, and as of 2015, Atlanta’s sworn officers almost mirrored the population in terms of racial composition. The population at the time was 54 percent black and 38 percent white, and the police force was 58 percent black and 38 percent white (Schwartzapfel 2015).

Another surprising finding of Keith and colleagues’ study was that 96 percent of the trail users were adults (Keith et al. 2016). Georgia’s obesity rate for children ages 10 to 17 in 2016 was about 32 percent (Trust for American Health 2018), so the lack of children on the Beltline is an alarming missed opportunity. However, a new initiative announced in 2017 seeks to improve health outcomes. With a donation of \$500,000 from Kaiser Permanente, the Atlanta Beltline

Partnership started the Westside Trail Community Grant Program (ABI - #1 2017). Some of the first recipients include the organizations Girls on the Run and the Georgia Conservancy, which both have missions to boost physical activity of residents living near the Westside Trail (ABI - #1 2017).

The Atlanta Beltline Inc. is currently working with partners to create a plan for public art on the Beltline, with the goal of sustaining cultural expression. The existing art on the Beltline came about through a grassroots process, and hopefully it will continue to be driven by the community. The newest installment on the Westside Trail is a great example of the community coming together to create a meaningful work of art that not only inspires, but also stands to educate visitors to the Beltline. Spelman College, DoSomething.Org, and Hands On Atlanta commissioned an Atlanta artist to lead volunteers on Spelman's MLK Day of Service in constructing a mural of Adrienne McNeil Herndon, the first female black faculty member of Atlanta University. Reflective of DoSomething.Org's mission is to fill gaps in the history books where accomplishments of people of color are missing, the Westside mural honors Herndon's contribution to the dramatic arts scene in Atlanta (ABI #1 2018).

Ponce City Market and Krog Street Market, often branded as some of the Beltline's biggest successes, are stunning examples of adaptive reuse that have changed the landscape dramatically on the Eastside Trail. The restaurants and retail options in these markets, though, tend to be higher-end, and thus exclude a large contingent of the population. In contrast to these luxurious food halls, a local resident in southwest Atlanta, Keitra Bates, is taking a new approach to food as the means for economic development, but specifically for the benefit of the low-income residents of the surrounding communities. Her concept is a shared kitchen and market space named "Marddy's," which was fashioned from the words, "market" and "buddy"

(Bainbridge 2018). Bates made a very interesting remark about the new residents on the westside: “They consider the west side a food desert. It’s a very peculiar case of cognitive dissonance” (Bainbridge 2018). By definitions typically employed in the planning and food justice literature, this part of the city would indeed be a food desert as it lacks access to a full-service grocery store. However, Bates’ quote demonstrates that standard definitions may not capture the full story, and therefore may not always be applicable. Bates explained that the westside is full of people who often go door-to-door to sell homemade foods, so the idea of Marddy’s is not to start from scratch, but rather to spark an entrepreneurial spirit among those talented home-cooks who may need assistance in starting a business (Bates 2018). By requiring all tenants to complete a health certification, Bates hopes that Marddy’s will give people a solid basis in the food production industry (Bainbridge 2018).

In addition to these efforts to control cultural displacement, Atlanta has taken steps to prevent physical displacement of the diverse populations living near the Beltline. Various homestead exemptions have been enacted to reduce the property tax burden for qualifying households. A basic homestead exemption applies to all City of Atlanta and Fulton County homeowners, which results in over \$800 in household savings per year. Seniors, 65 and older, making up to \$39,000 per year are eligible for a homestead freeze, through which the assessed value of the property becomes frozen the year the head of household turns 65. In this way, the senior will pay the same amount of property taxes throughout the rest of their time occupying the property. In addition, seniors who make up to \$40,000 per year can also take advantage of a homestead exemption, which may result in an extra \$200 in savings, depending on the household’s income. Finally, significant tax exemptions are available to the surviving spouse of a deceased firefighter or peace officer killed in their line of work (ABI #2 2018).

C. Democracy

1. Planning Process

Since 1974, the City of Atlanta has had a decentralized system of garnering public participation in the planning process. Through twenty-five “neighborhood planning units” (NPU), citizens have formal avenues to comment on land use proposals and influence decisions that will directly impact them. These planning units ensure that every neighborhood has representation, so residents know who they can approach in their communities with land use concerns. In many cases, the NPU is the first entity with whom a developer may propose a project and discuss the needed permits. Though NPUs cannot mandate anything, they are able to make recommendations to the developer that may facilitate the zoning approval process as the developer proceeds. While their influence on local land used decisions can be strong, NPUs do not have the power to influence the city budget, according to an interview participant (Personal Communication 2018).

From the beginning of the Beltline planning process, the geography has been divided into smaller units, first grouped into twelve ‘activity centers’ in the 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan, and later consolidated into ten ‘subareas’ through the master planning process that began in 2007. The activity centers were identified directly through community engagement, as they were the most frequently cited areas in need of redevelopment during the public participation for the 2005 Redevelopment Plan. The Beltline Inc. invited citizens to partake in the planning through a variety of modes: workshops, Town Hall public meetings with four NPU clusters, open informational sessions jointly conducted with the Atlanta Development Authority, tours of the Beltline corridor, and online public comment forms. Over a three-month period, 1600 people participated in the workshops for the 2005 Redevelopment Plan. This plan

did not breakdown the composition of its participants, in groupings such as race, housing tenure, and geographic areas, so it is difficult to ascertain if a broad range of viewpoints were heard.

The subarea master planning process ensued in 2007. The Atlanta Beltline Inc. and the City of Atlanta Office of Planning and Community Development prepared plans directly from input from study groups in each subarea. After these documents were drawn up, the subarea master plans were presented to the relevant NPUs, comments were received and integrated into the plans, and then by 2012, the City Council adopted all ten subarea plans.

2. Implementation Process

As introduced in the “Literature Review” section, Susan Fainstein’s definition of democracy relies on the capabilities approach, which posits that democracies have a duty to equalize the opportunities accessible to different socioeconomic groups. Thus, to measure the effectiveness of a democracy, a traditional cost-benefit analysis is inadequate; rather, it is necessary to assess how benefits accrue to the worst off. The 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan does not clearly specify how its investments will benefit the most disadvantaged groups. With all of the controversy surrounding the Beltline in the years since the original plan, though, Atlanta residents have demanded more transparency from project leaders. With this push, Atlanta Beltline Inc. and its partners have been more forthcoming about how its programming positively impacts disadvantaged groups. The City of Atlanta, nonprofits, and neighborhood organizations have also actively sought new methods for community engagement in order to remove barriers for groups that are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making processes. One interview participant said that the Atlanta Beltline Partnership historically did not use the correct posture when approaching communities, but it learned new ways to engage, such

as door-to-door visits and snail mail, rather than its old method of only sending digital communications such as email and Facebook invites (Personal communication 2018).

One of the biggest concerns heard by the Atlanta Beltline Inc. after the construction of the Eastside Trail was that predatory homebuyers were taking advantage of low-income residents by putting offers in front of them that they could not refuse. Unfortunately, many of these residents proceeded to sell their homes without taking the time to understand the true property values. The Atlanta Beltline Inc. intervened in 2016 by partnering with Home Place Consulting to offer a series of “Homeowner Empowerment Workshops.” The goal of these free courses is to educate homeowners on their rights, property values, and tools at their disposal, whether they want to stay in their homes or if they wish to sell.

Bill Bolling of the Atlanta Community Food Bank has actively worked to expand opportunities for low-income households in Atlanta for decades. In 1988, he launched the Atlanta Regional Housing Forum, which has given Atlanta’s housing partners and concerned citizens a recurring meeting time to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions. Some of the most recent topics addressed at this quarterly meeting include homelessness, Atlanta’s rise in evictions, and affordable housing preservation strategies. In September of 2017 before the November mayoral election, the forum hosted all of the mayoral candidates on a panel so that citizens could question the candidates and learn about their stances on housing policy (Atlanta Regional Housing Forum 2017).

The Partnership for Southern Equity, an Atlanta-based nonprofit, launched a new program in 2018 called Resident Leaders for Equity, which provides a new avenue for public participation by citizens of NPU-V, which encapsulates some of the neighborhoods most at risk of displacement due to the Beltline. Residents who apply and are accepted into the program will

take part in a nine-month engagement and education series, where conversations will focus on racial equity, community building, identification of issues, and ideas for improvements (AECF 2018). The goal of this program is to foster leadership and democratic ideals among vulnerable residents so that they are prepared to participate actively in public decision-making.

At the end of 2017, the new Atlanta Beltline Inc. CEO Brian McGowan experimented with a community engagement technique through which events called “Brian McGowan AMA: Ask Me Anything” were advertised on Facebook. The Beltline’s Community Engagement team said that the events were purposefully posted two days prior to the meeting time in order to keep them small and personal. Events were held weekly in different coffee shops in geographically-distinct parts of Atlanta. These meetings were well-attended despite the short timeframe of notice. Many people wanted to hear about the new CEO’s policy direction in a casual setting where they would not be afraid to ask questions. At one of these meetings, McGowan praised the strong grassroots efforts that existed at the conception of the Beltline project, and he said he hopes to regain the community voice and rebuild trust. His authenticity seemed to be appreciated by the attendees. After his basic introduction, McGowan let the conversation flow in whatever directions attendees wished to take it. This engagement method was particularly effective for breaking down barriers and allowing people to voice their concerns without fitting them within a prescribed agenda.

Another innovative community engagement technique developed by an entrepreneur, Jenn Graham, and the Atlanta Regional Commission is called “Civic Dinners.” Through this web-based platform, individuals can sign up to host a dinner with a specific conversation theme. Then, anyone who finds the events on the platform can sign up to attend the dinner, as long as there are still seats at the table—Civic Dinners recommends a total of six to ten attendees. The

Civic Dinners platform also provides the host with a conversation design to facilitate the process. In addition, the host can choose to pay for additional consulting services such as marketing and post-conversation actions (Vega 2018). The Civic Dinners idea is a simple but needed intervention in a city where people are often stuck in their own silos.

Of course, the last two engagement methods discussed do not take into account what has become known as the “digital divide” between rich and poor, young versus old, and well-served broadband areas compared to underserved areas. The Beltline Community Benefits Resolution adopted in 2005 included in its guiding principles the need to bridge the digital divide and recommended that all new multifamily developments include high-speed internet. The federal ConnectHome program, which provides tablets and internet access to low-income households, is a great program, but it is underfunded. Some private companies such as T-Mobile and Comcast have also stepped up to provide free internet access to low-income households, and their numbers show that they have helped hundreds of thousands of households in Georgia (Kass 2018). More local efforts are needed, though, to reduce the digital divide and provide greater access of opportunity. While online tools have stretched the ability of public agencies and non-governmental organizations to engage people in new ways, it is important that offline engagement continues to evolve as well.

VI. Lessons Drawn from Atlanta Beltline Case

As the preceding sections detailed, the City of Atlanta has not checked every box on Susan Fainstein’s criteria for a “just city,” but it has demonstrated improvement since the beginning of the Beltline planning process. Despite recent positive strides, inequities persist today because of structural issues stifling the decision-making process, the perpetual reliance on the garbage can model, and the historical lack of implementation planning.

A. Power Differentials between Decision-Making Bodies

The Atlanta Beltline Inc., a private nonprofit created by the Atlanta Development Authority, is considered a “quasi-governmental agency” (Fausset 2016). It administers a variety of functions, such as securing government funding, constructing the trail, engaging the community, and reporting to the taxing authorities that enabled the TAD (Atlanta Beltline Inc. 2017). Another nonprofit, the Atlanta Beltline Partnership, focuses on promotion of the project to gain financial support from private, corporate, or philanthropic sources (Atlanta Beltline Inc. 2017). Though the missions of these groups are related, it is necessary to dig deeper to understand the underlying motivations. Both entities are responsible for securing funding, so they each take actions to make the project as attractive as possible. The Atlanta Beltline Inc. focuses on garnering governmental support from local, state, and federal sources, so it must compete with other projects to demonstrate the greatest social benefit. The Atlanta Beltline Partnership, on the other hand, seeks private investment, so it must show that there will be a return on investment. It makes sense under the theory of strategic rationalism that the Partnership encourages high-end development because that is most likely to appeal to private investors (Alexander 2000). It also follows that the Atlanta Beltline Inc. and the Atlanta Beltline Partnership must advocate for the outcomes that are conducive to the interests of their investors. Therefore, whichever group raises more capital is likely to have more influence in the decision-making process.

A significant power differential exists between the major players in the Beltline planning process, and those with more power effectively have greater ability to sway decision-making in their favor (Allison 1999). In this case, the City of Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, and Fulton County hold a great deal of power because they can vote to issue TAD bonds. The Atlanta

Beltline Inc. is essentially the legislative child of the public and private partners, so it must carry out its activities under great scrutiny, especially since the mismanagement of TAD funding and the loophole in the legislation were publicly acknowledged in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. The Atlanta Beltline Partnership may speak the loudest at the negotiation table since they bring in private investments, which have thus far outpaced public investment (Atlanta Beltline Inc. 2017). Citizens, even those in advisory roles, have very little influence; for instance, a black activist named Eugene Bowens served on the Tax Allocation District Advisory Committee, and he publicly criticized the Atlanta Beltline Inc. for disregarding this group's recommendations. One of his biggest criticisms was that the majority of TAD revenue was initially spent in the northeastern quadrant of the city, which he said was "not equitable or appropriate" (Pendergrast 2017). Because of the Atlanta Beltline Inc.'s lack of funding in the early days, though, it was very difficult for its 7-person staff to attend to the 45-person Tax Allocation District Advisory Committee. The TAD legislation mandated that this committee include 45 members, but this may not have been the best structure for effectively engaging the public.

B. Garbage Can Model

The Atlanta Beltline project fits the garbage can model because after it was designed, people speculated about the range of issues that it could solve. On paper, the Beltline looks like a beautiful plan because it makes use of unused infrastructure, it connects the city through a multi-modal network, it improves air quality both by taking cars off the road and by planting greenery around the loop, it enhances social capital and public health as it brings people together in a walkable environment, it stimulates the economy through new market opportunities, and it is supposed to provide housing that is affordable and accessible to the greenway. Georgia Tech Professor Mike Dobbins wrote, "A lot of time, money, and effort has gone into trying to make

the ‘solution’ fit the problem, [but] with a successful referendum it is not too late to redirect the city’s efforts to catch up with commonsense transit planning” (Dobbins 2016). In other words, if city planners stop trying to use the Beltline as a panacea to all of Atlanta’s problems, other more viable equitable development strategies may arise. An editorial in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* made the astute observation, “The Beltline cannot single-handedly erase blight in poor neighborhoods, cure traffic congestion or, for that matter, the common cold” (Pendergrast 2017). The belief that the Beltline can automatically solve every issue is unfounded and naïve. Much more work would need to go into context-specific forecasting and evaluating of outcomes if the City of Atlanta was to be a more rational actor (Hopkins 2001).

A plan-based action, as defined by Lewis Hopkins in *The Logic of Making Plans*, is a plan that takes into consideration the interdependencies of the actions it involves (Hopkins 2001). With so many organizations involved in planning for the Atlanta Beltline, it is difficult for a plan-based action to be pursued because there are too many goals and too much uncertainty. For instance, the 2005 Atlanta Beltline Redevelopment Plan acknowledged the great uncertainties associated with the transportation goals it laid out. Yet transportation has always made up the biggest portion of the Beltline budget. Cheaper alternatives could have been implemented, such as following Ed McBrayer’s recommendation of building pedestrian and bike trails without designing for the eventuality of transit. On the sections of the right-of-way that the Atlanta Beltline Inc. has acquired but not yet constructed concrete trails, it started allowing public hiking use in 2010. Perhaps this interim trail tactical urbanism model should have been launched from the beginning, as a means of proving the concept of the Beltline, building up financial support, and designing a more intentional plan for the entire corridor.

C. Lack of Affordable Housing Implementation Plan

Because of the lack of strong implementation steps in the early plans for the Beltline, City leaders made decisions more incrementally. These decisions are often based on political timelines, as elected officials focus on tasks that can be achieved during their terms so that they can heighten their chances of reelection. However, affordable housing deals often require a significant timeline and do not offer high rates of return for developers. Accordingly, the City encouraged quicker turnover, luxury development from the beginning because it need to prove the concept of the TAD and the Beltline's ability to transform the area. Unfortunately, this lack of foresight resulted in even greater difficulty with developing affordable housing. Once census tracts exceed a certain median income, they are no longer eligible for the enhanced percentage of low-income housing tax credits available in "qualified census tracts." Atlanta's Grant Park neighborhood recently suffered from this exact situation, as a proposed senior housing development was not able to come to fruition because the area no longer met HUD's definition of a qualified census tract (Grant Park Neighborhood Association 2018).

John O'Callaghan, president of the housing advocacy group Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, also voiced the following concern: "The large number of luxury apartments being built across the city are raising the prices of the median apartment in the city, so we are seeing prices for apartments not only go up in this luxury market, but for middle-income and lower-income Atlantans. By providing incentives for developers of luxury housing that are renting at very high prices, I worry that we are lifting rental prices across the city" (Shamma 2016). This quotation warns that naturally-occurring affordable housing disappears as more luxury developments go up. As such, affordable housing preservation policies should have been enacted on the forefront of any development. Because affordable housing was not viewed

as a priority, though, the City missed a huge opportunity to buy up land and existing properties while it was still cheap, especially when the market hit rock-bottom during the Recession. Now that the Beltline has caused significant appreciation, land acquisition presents a major barrier to affordable housing development.

D. New Commitments to Affordable Housing

The new inclusionary zoning ordinance mandated in the Beltline and Westside Overlay Districts is an important step in the right direction for the City of Atlanta. Some critics claim that by not implementing the policy citywide, there is a risk that development will move outside the overlay district boundaries where there is no requirement to include affordable housing units. However, multiple interview participants did not think that this was a major risk, given that the Beltline is Atlanta's activity magnet. One participant estimated that the overlay district may only lose about ten percent of the development it would have seen without the inclusionary zoning ordinance in place (Personal communication 2018). Nevertheless, advocates still hope that the inclusionary zoning pilot test will lead to a citywide expansion, as more residents demand it.

The Atlanta Beltline Inc. now has a mechanism for holding developers accountable for providing affordable housing, which promises to help with implementation of the 5,600-unit affordable housing goal. The Beltline Equitable Development Plan stresses that this goal was never intended to be achieved by the Atlanta Beltline Inc. alone, but rather through public and private partnerships. An interview subject who was closely involved with the planning process noted that the project framing set up very ambitious goals for the Beltline, and the public interpreted these desired outcomes as promises that the Atlanta Beltline Inc. was solely responsible for delivering. Rather, the Beltline is meant to be a multifaceted project made possible through coordination with a variety of players. The Atlanta Beltline Inc. published an

Integrated Action Plan for Housing and Economic Development in 2015, and some of its recommendations have already come to fruition, given the stronger focus and the support from partners. Coordination with public agencies such as the Atlanta Housing Authority and Invest Atlanta was poor in the early years of the Beltline, but now the Atlanta Beltline Inc. has engaged with both these partners to leverage resources and work together on implementation steps. Community development corporations in Atlanta have also been instrumental in moving the needle toward equity. If the Atlanta Beltline Inc. can foster collaboration between the public and private networks, it may be able to bring about the just outcomes that have been promised all along.

VII. Best Practices in Affordable Housing and Community Development

The following case studies of Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Portland, and the Washington D.C. metropolitan area highlight prominent themes in the equitable development playbook, namely grassroots activism, asset-based community development, and anti-displacement policies. Grassroots activism ensures that plans reflect the needs and desires of a community. Many activists start with small-scale, low-cost, experimental ways of physically influencing the design of cities, which is termed ‘tactical urbanism.’ Cities can embrace these placemaking efforts by engaging with existing community groups and facilitating their actions rather than standing in the way with outdated, overly-restrictive policies and zoning codes. Through asset-based community development, cities can work with communities to recognize and strengthen their existing assets, rather than focusing on the deficiencies in the neighborhoods. Finally, anti-

displacement measures can take a variety of shapes, but they often include providing financial and technical assistance to communities and enacting safeguarding policies.

A. Case Studies

1. Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York

Curran and Hamilton present an interesting case study of an industrial neighborhood called Greenpoint, located in Brooklyn, New York. They promote a style of development that is “just green enough” so that vulnerable residents will not be at risk of displacement (Curran & Hamilton 2012). At the time of this study, Greenpoint was somewhat gentrified, but the authors said that various community groups were involved in preserving the industrial character of the neighborhood and preventing displacement of long-term residents. Based on previous literature, the authors claimed that another reason that gentrification had been slow is that the Newtown Creek’s designation as a Superfund site attached a stigma to the area and thus kept property values low (Curran & Hamilton 2012).

In order to learn about the neighborhood’s history as well as the community’s ideas about its future, Curran and Hamilton (2012) conducted twenty-four interviews from December 2008 through February 2012, both in person and over the phone. They reached out to long-time residents as well as newcomers, representatives from community groups that lived both in and outside of the neighborhood, elected officials and city planners, the Attorney General, and the Department of Environmental Conservation (the last two did not respond to the interview requests).

Ever since 1978, the Newtown Creek (within the study area) has been under environmental scrutiny because an oil spill had been sighted. The state confirmed that cleanup had occurred in 1990, but their confirmation was apparently invalid because the spill was

rediscovered in 2002 (Curran & Hamilton 2012). In a federal lawsuit against ExxonMobil, a \$19.5 million settlement led to New York's establishment of an Environmental Benefits Projects (EBP) fund, specifically for projects in the Greenpoint neighborhood. In 2010, the Newtown Creek was designated as a Superfund site, which also contributed to sustainability in Greenpoint (Curran & Hamilton 2012).

Curran and Hamilton (2012) explained that both the EBP and the Superfund cleanup process fostered public participation through advisory groups. The interviews revealed that the community was happy with the selected members of these advisory groups, as these people had been long-time activists in the area. The timeline of the Newtown Creek cleanup is 20-25 years, so the full impacts of the environmental improvements are not yet known (Curran & Hamilton 2012).

A state program called the Brownfields Opportunity Area (BOA) also generated community support for sustainable development in Greenpoint. The Newtown Creek BOA is a coalition of the Newtown Creek Alliance, an environmental activist group called Riverkeeper, and a nonprofit industrial developer named the Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center. Their work was crucial for creating a vision for the area's future that preserved the industrial economy while also restoring the environmental conditions, which the authors said is a distinctly different vision than that in PlaNYC 2030, the city's sustainability plan. They also noted that PlaNYC was developed by an independent consultant that only incorporated minimal public input, while the BOA worked directly with the community to develop its vision (Curran & Hamilton 2012).

The BOA's vision included a redevelopment of the Newtown Creek Waterfront that satisfied the residents' desires for more walking trails—Greenpoint was severely lacking in open

space compared to the city's average—and other small-scale green amenities that would improve public health. One aspect of their plan that has been realized is the Newtown Creek Nature Walk, which is located “in the shadow of a sewage treatment plant,” and is therefore described as ironic (Curran & Hamilton 2012). Regardless, most of the community viewed the nature walk as a success after a hard-fought battle. However, some worried that the nature walk would encourage more mixed-use development that would stimulate gentrification (Curran & Hamilton 2012). Residents are also concerned about new businesses in the area, such as a shifting emphasis to recreation (i.e. kayaking in the creek). However, the BOA included in their plans ways to protect industry. One of Curran's prior studies supported that a wave of development could actually help the manufacturing businesses if they learn to cater to the new markets. For instance, one of the interviewees said, “if you can call your product green, and there's an immense interest in green building supplies in new construction, you're in good shape” (Curran & Hamilton 2012). By preparing the businesses to be successful in the sustainable economy, the BOA believes the manufacturing companies would be able to make more money, which would help lift the residents out of poverty (Curran & Hamilton 2012).

Though the community is not in total agreement about the desires for Greenpoint's future, Curran and Hamilton (2012) found that the neighborhood organizations at work were effectively drawing participation from a range of stakeholders. Therefore, although the future is uncertain, the development patterns observed thus far seemed to be equitable.

2. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia is one of five cities selected to be a demonstration city by a national initiative called “Reimagining the Civic Commons.” Funded by four large foundations, this initiative is essentially a matching grant program which provides \$20 million dollars with the

expectation that the cities will also invest \$20 million in civic projects (Reimagining the Civic Commons 2018). The intent of these projects is to strengthen civic anchors, such as libraries and parks, so that people have safe places to come together and build community. One civic commons practice that has been effective in Philadelphia is engaging the public through different avenues. For instance, “learning labs” are opportunities for renowned community revitalization leaders from across the country to come to Philadelphia and engage with the local people, while “learning journeys” involve local leaders traveling to other places to understand different perspectives with regards to equitable development. Meanwhile, “learning exchanges” allow for Philadelphia’s community activists to share ideas and develop solutions (Reimagining the Civic Commons 2018).

One project in Philadelphia’s Civic Commons profile is the Bartram’s Mile greenway, which will connect with the historic botanical garden Bartram’s Garden. Although this garden has been in place since the 1700s, it has not always been viewed as a safe community space, especially for minorities who reported that it was unwelcoming (Reimagining the Civic Commons 2018). However, Bartram Garden has recently expanded its programming from focusing not only on those interested in horticulture, but also the surrounding community. It now hosts daily events to engage people with a range of different interests, and as a result, a growing number of people can share in the beauty of the gardens (Walljasper 2017). Community gardening appeals to people from a wide range of backgrounds. The Community Farm and Food Resource Center has many youth and adult gardening apprenticeship programs, which strengthen the community’s sense of ownership in the space. In addition, a performance group called BARETEETH has engaged with people in the surrounding area, helping them understand how

Bartram's Garden is relevant to them; for instance, it has led spatial justice workshops titled, "Black Joy and the Future of the Farm as a Black Space" (Kochman 2017).

Another Civic Commons project is the renovation of the Lovett Memorial Library, which is in one of Philadelphia's most stable racially-integrated neighborhoods, Mt. Airy (Reimagining the Civic Commons 2018). The library is already a popular spot, but now it will provide opportunities for even more people because it is being transformed into a full-fledged park, with accessibility upgrades, a teen center, and increased technological capacity (Reimagining the Civic Commons 2018). Mt. Airy has maintained a diverse population largely because of the efforts of a community development corporation called Mt. Airy USA. This entity is an active affordable housing developer as well as provider of housing counseling (Mt. Airy USA 2018). They also promote a sense of pride in the neighborhood through encouraging participation in parent-teacher groups in the public schools, the Business Association of Mount Airy, and the Weavers Way Food Cooperative (Mt. Airy USA 2018). Additionally, Mt. Airy USA coordinates with the East Mt. Airy Neighbors and the West Mt. Airy Neighbors through the Mt. Airy Schools Coalition to provide additional resources to the schools. Mt. Airy USA then provides data and stories to the real estate agents in the area so that the schools' successes are publicized (Mt. Airy USA 2018).

3. Portland, Oregon

Portland is similar to Atlanta in that it has taken large measures to pursue sustainability, and now affordable housing and equity issues have risen to the forefront of the city's planning efforts. In the planning process for the Portland Plan, equitable development was a guiding motive because prior studies indicated that the city was a "top destination for the young and college educated" and for "empty-nester households" due to its reputation for livability, and thus

it was primed for gentrification (Bates 2013). Bates helped guide the city to embark on equitable development strategies as early as possible, but she also recognized that gentrification had already begun to occur in some parts of the city, so she provided a suite of tools to address gentrification in the mid- to late-stages. Tools to be implemented in the early phase of gentrification tend to focus on zoning changes and other city actions that can facilitate the development of affordable housing, as well as policies that can protect existing residents such as eviction protections. In the later stages, suggested tools include a “right-to-return” policy, commercial stabilization through technical and financial assistance, and preservation of existing subsidized housing (Bates 2013).

At the neighborhood level, the Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative was created so that city representatives could work alongside neighborhood leaders in districts that had high poverty rates and low commercial investment. The goal is to develop a shared vision and then give the communities the tools to make the vision a reality, such as grant and loan programs for minority-owned businesses (APA: Oregon Chapter 2016). Similarly, the Community Livability Grant program is available throughout the city to anyone that makes the case that the project will improve outcomes for minorities (Wicks 2018). Portland has also published its own Racial Equity Toolkit as a way of guiding policy. It emphasizes tracking “equity indicators” so that the city can understand what works and can try different interventions where outcomes have not improved (APA: Oregon Chapter 2016).

Portland is also a leader in a new phenomenon known as “food-oriented development.” Through this community economic development model, food ties people together from a variety of backgrounds. Food hubs and urban agriculture are driving the movement, as these entrepreneurship opportunities are often realizable without large startup capital (Kabel 2017).

The Hacienda Community Development Corporation worked with the City of Portland to transform an abandoned lot into today's thriving Portland Mercado, a Latino public market and business incubation space. After it opened in 2015, the Mercado became home to over 100 employees and 19 food startups, composed of people from 20 different countries, and its sales hit \$2.5 million in the first year (Kabel 2017). The business assistance and shared facilities at the incubator allow low-income residents to find new opportunities and synergies (Kabel 2017). The site is also known for its cultural celebration, with its prevalence of musical artists and other performers. The success of this initiative can be attributed to its truly neighborhood-based quality, as existing community members led the process and found a way to retain their culture, while also welcoming newcomers (Kabel 2017).

One of Portland's most recent policies at the heart of sustainability and equity is its Green Building Policy for Affordable Housing, which applies to all affordable housing projects with twenty units or more, or any projects that receive at least ten percent of their funding from the Portland Housing Bureau. The intent of this policy is not only to put in place healthy living standards for affordable housing, but also to help tenants reduce costs through energy and water efficiency (Portland Housing Bureau 2017). Portland's Climate Action Plan calls for net zero energy consumption in affordable housing projects by 2050 and 50 percent water reduction by 2040 (Portland Housing Bureau 2017).

4. Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

Washington D.C. is currently undergoing the planning and design process for a hugely transformative project called the 11th Street Bridge Park. This project has already received many accolades for its equitable development plan, which was developed by studying the shortfalls of the Shaw neighborhood revitalization in the early 2000s (Leimenstoll 2016). One aspect of the

Shaw revitalization that has been both acclaimed and criticized is the Community Benefits Agreement. The goal of this document was to ensure that certain public goods, such as affordable housing, were provided, so the intent was right, but the implementation was not strong enough. While there were some affordable units built, the Community Benefits Agreement did not have benchmarks with consequences that would hold the developers accountable. As such, the neighborhood makeup shifted from being about 90% African-American to only 30% (Leimenstoll 2016). Another flaw of the Shaw revitalization was that it tried to attract newcomers through “black branding” techniques that highlighted the neighborhood’s diversity. These efforts were superficial though, and they did not celebrate black heritage as much as they exploited it (Leimenstoll 2016). Moving forward, it will be important for the 11th Street planners to work with existing residents to ensure that spaces are designed that are relevant to them so that cultural displacement is not as much of a threat as it was in Shaw.

In addition, the 11th Street Equitable Development Plan has laid out several measures to prevent physical displacement. Many of these policies involve working with existing community development organizations and advocacy groups, as well as securing philanthropic funding in order to create affordable homeownership opportunities (11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan 2016). It mentions pursuing a community land trust model, creating a homeownership resource center, and following the Build First model which gives residents a close place to live during redevelopment projects (11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan 2016). Washington D.C. already has policies to protect tenants’ rights, such as the Tenant’s Opportunity to Purchase Act and the District’s Opportunity to Purchase Act, which apply when a building owner plans to sell. Giving the tenants or the District itself the first opportunity to purchase is extremely helpful for maintaining long-term affordability. One of the

policies in the Equitable Development Plan is educating low-income renters about this right and helping them find resources such as lawyers or loans (11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan 2016). Finally, an active Community Development Organization called MANNA Inc. has teamed up with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to provide \$50 million in grants, loans, and technical assistance through the “Elevating Equity Initiative” (LISC DC 2015).

Montgomery County, Maryland, a neighbor of Washington D.C., has the oldest inclusionary zoning policy in the country. It recently updated its ordinance to require that all developments with twenty units or more provide affordable units, and the affordability periods have been extended—99 years for rental units and 30 years for homeownership units (Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs 2017). This change is supported by the Grounded Solutions Network, which published statistics on inclusionary housing programs and found that 80 percent of inclusionary programs require units to remain affordable for 30 years, and one-third of those require 99-year or perpetual affordability (Grounded Solutions Network, 2017). Furthermore, Montgomery County added a new compliance option to the ordinance which allows developers to convert existing market-rate homes to deed-restricted affordable homes rather than developing new housing units, which could have a big impact since the cost of rehabilitating existing units is substantially lower than the cost of developing new units (Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs 2017). Though these strategies do not represent a silver bullet to the affordable housing issue, they do help to round out the comprehensiveness of Montgomery County’s approach and ensure that it is up-to-date with national best practices.

B. Emerging Community Development Tools and Strategies

Strategy	Categorization	Description	Implementation Example
Just Cause Eviction Legislation	Tenant Protections	Seattle’s legislation includes the following just causes for eviction: nonpayment of rent, noncompliance with lease terms, chronically late rent payments, and the intention of the landlord to occupy the unit themselves or rent the unit to an immediate family member.	Seattle
Right of First Refusal/Opportunity to Purchase Act	Tenant Protections	When an affordable unit is converted to market-rate, right of first refusal requires the property owner to inform the tenant with reasonable advance notice of the changing circumstances. The tenant has the first option to stay in the unit before the unit is marketed to a third-party. An Opportunity to Purchase Act can also give the first right of purchase to the municipality.	Washington D.C.
Preference for Displaced Residents Policy	Tenant Protections	In publicly-funded or subsidized developments, the municipality can impose a policy that gives preference to involuntarily-displaced residents. The City of Raleigh defines “involuntary” displacement as that which results from government action, loss of housing assistance, or natural disaster.	Portland Raleigh
Multifamily Property Tax Exemption	Affordable Housing Development	Multifamily properties are given a property tax exemption if the developer restricts 20 to 25 percent of the units for a defined income.	Seattle
Inventory of Publicly-Owned Land/Property	Affordable Housing Development	Many cities are starting to identify their current inventory of publicly-owned land and properties because these will help in identifying opportunities for affordable housing development.	Seattle
Notice of Funding Availability	Affordable Housing Development	Seattle’s Office of Housing releases “Notices of Funding Availability” on a semi-annual basis, with prescribed priorities for each funding source.	Seattle
Revolving Loan Fund	Affordable Housing Development	Revolving loan funds offer a unique way to provide gap financing for affordable housing development. These funds are self-replenishing as payments on initial loans are used to issue new loans.	Denver Santa Barbara
Linkage Fees	Affordable Housing Development	During the permitting process, developers are charged a fee that is directly proportional to nonresidential and residential space in their developments. A formal “Nexus Study” must demonstrate a relationship between different use types	Town of Jackson/Teton County, Wyoming Denver Los Angeles

Strategy	Categorization	Description	Implementation Example
		and the affordable housing need they generate.	
Affordable Housing Property Tax Levy/ Matching Fund	Affordable Housing Development	The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act allows municipalities to add a small surcharge to their property taxes to fund affordable housing, open space acquisition and historic preservation. The state matches local dollars by up to 30 percent.	Massachusetts
Landlord Ambassadors Program	Affordable Housing Preservation	New York’s “Landlord Ambassador Program” provides financial and technical assistance to nonprofits, who then assist landlords in rehabilitation and management needed to preserve naturally-occurring affordable housing (usually small multifamily developments).	New York
“Buy-Down” Program	Affordable Housing Preservation	A “buy-down program” allows developers to convert existing market-rate homes to deed-restricted affordable homes rather than developing new housing units (this is a compliance option of Montgomery County’s inclusionary zoning ordinance).	Montgomery County
Retrofitting Bikeshare for the Benefit of Low-to-Moderate Income Users	Equity Planning	An organization called Equiticity created a “bike library” to function like a bikeshare program, but with very low annual fees for low-to-moderate income users. It offers e-bikes for 40-mile trips. It demonstrated entry-level job creation since dockless bikeshare programs require redistribution of bikes.	Chicago
Community Benefits Agreement, mandated by a Request for Proposals	Equity Planning	Government entities can hold private developers accountable for providing certain benefits, as laid out in the RFP and signed as a contract when the developer is selected.	Portland
Standing Area Advisory Committees	Equity Planning	Advisory committees allow Community-Based Organizations to take a lead role in decision-making for their communities.	Portland
Analysis of Displacement Risk and Access to Opportunities	Equity Planning	In the Seattle Growth and Equity report, which was developed to inform an Environmental Impact Statement for Seattle’s 2035 growth strategy, Seattle’s neighborhoods are characterized based on how they score on two different indices: the displacement risk index and the access to opportunity index. In this way, Seattle developed its growth strategy by focusing on expanding access to opportunities and taking actions to mitigate displacement risk.	Seattle

VIII. Recommendations for Atlanta

Georgia is classified as a ‘Home Rule’ state, meaning municipalities have the autonomy to enact zoning and land development regulations without expressed state-enabling legislation. At the same time, municipalities must ensure that their policies do not conflict with the Official Code of Georgia (OCGA). This state code is very clear about the powers that municipalities do and do not have.

For instance, OCGA Section 44-7-19 states: “No county or municipal corporation may enact, maintain, or enforce any ordinance or resolution which would regulate in any way the amount of rent to be charged for privately owned, single-family or multiple-unit residential rental property. This Code section shall not be construed as prohibiting any county or municipal corporation, or any authority created by a county or municipal corporation for that purpose, from regulating in any way property belonging to such county, such municipal corporation, or such authority from entering into any agreements with private persons, which agreements regulate the amount of rent to be charged for such rental properties.” This ban on rent control presents a challenge for the City of Atlanta with regards to its inclusionary zoning policy. An interview participant explained that implementing the ordinance in just the Beltline and Westside Overlay Districts was a way to test the legality of inclusionary zoning in Georgia, as no other municipality had attempted to do so before. Based on the last line of the quotation presented from the Code, the City of Atlanta interpreted that it has the ability to condition the approval of private developments on an agreement to provide affordable housing.

According to Atlanta’s new Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, Land Use Restrictive Agreements are the mechanism for controlling the affordability of inclusionary housing units.

These restrictive land use covenants are bound by OCGA Section 44-5-60, which sets a duration of 20 years for any type of restrictive covenant. However, in 1993, the Georgia legislature amended Section 44-5-60 so that, in subdivisions with at least 15 lots, the covenants will renew automatically for successive 20-year periods unless 51 percent of the lot owners vote to terminate the restrictions (Lueder, Larkin, & Hunter 2018). Thus, Atlanta does not have the power to require affordability periods greater than 20 years for inclusionary developments. With the OCGA's 1993 provision, though, there is a chance that property owners will not call a vote after the 20-year period, and the covenant will automatically renew.

Given these legal restraints, the following recommendations are proposed for the City of Atlanta and various partners introduced throughout this paper:

1. Explore dedicated funding streams for affordable housing that can be sustained after the Beltline project is completed.
2. Reauthorize a larger affordable housing bond than in the past (greater than \$75 million).
3. Require legally-binding Community Benefits Agreements for projects of a substantial size (should be defined in the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances). When the City releases "Requests for Proposals," it can also require CBAs as a condition on the development.
4. Analyze vulnerable populations and design policies and assistance programs accordingly. For future implementation of Tax Allocation Districts, establish property tax exemptions for qualified households from the beginning.
5. Expand the use of the 4% federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit for acquisition and rehabilitation of existing properties.

6. Develop grant and loan programs for multifamily rehabilitation and energy efficiency upgrades. Condition the receipt of grants or loans on an agreement that the development will be preserved for affordable housing for twenty years. Require Land Use Restrictive Agreements to be recorded.
7. Modify the new inclusionary zoning ordinance to: 1) deepen the level of affordability that is targeted by the policy, and 2) allow a buy-down option as an alternative to constructing new affordable housing, under which developers can pay for the rehabilitation of existing market-rate units. The ordinance could detail livability standards that rehabilitation projects must meet.
8. Adopt “Just Cause” evictions legislation. In addition, enact a “right of first refusal” policy that gives the tenant the first opportunity to purchase. Create accompanying guidelines to connect tenants with needed resources.
9. Host a semi-annual “nonprofit fair” where citizens are invited to learn about the range of organizations active in their communities. These events could also help the nonprofits network with each other and share best practices.
10. Create a “Memorandum of Understanding” for any project where public-private partnerships are involved so that each party has clear expectations. In plans, an implementation matrix should also delineate the responsibilities of each party.

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Appendix A. Geographic Context

The following map is provided to give geographic context to this report.



Figure 1. Beltline Map

Source: Fausset, Richard. 2016. "A Glorified Sidewalk, and the Path to Transform Atlanta." *The New York Times*.

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/us/atlanta-beltline.html?_r=0.

Appendix B. Summary of Atlanta's Community Development Tools and Strategies

1. Equity Strategies

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Coordination between Key Players	Atlanta Beltline Inc., Atlanta Housing Authority, Invest Atlanta	Very little coordination between city agencies (prior to 2015) resulted in missed opportunities to leverage funding and expertise. Criticism has led to new partnerships and attention to cross-cutting techniques.	Greater coordination was discussed in Invest Atlanta's 2015 Housing Strategy. In 2017, a new partnership between the Atlanta Beltline Inc. and the Atlanta Housing Authority was announced. These entities are working together to draft new implementation steps.	Invest Atlanta created a one-stop-shop website for housing resources and data from different agencies, as well as a common form for applying for funding from city agencies. The Atlanta Housing Authority committed to allocate \$30 million in Moving-to-Work reserves for single-family and multifamily acquisitions within the BeltLine Redevelopment Area from 2017 to 2022.
Inclusionary Zoning	City of Atlanta Office of Zoning & Development, Office of Housing and Community Development	In 2016, an inclusionary zoning policy was enacted in the Beltline Overlay District, requiring all developers who received any kind of public subsidy to set aside a specified portion of the development for affordable housing.	In 2017, a new inclusionary zoning ordinance was adopted in both the Beltline and Westside Overlay Districts. This new policy requires all developers of multifamily developments with at least ten units to set aside a specified portion of the development for affordable, regardless of the receipt of public subsidy.	N/A
Renter-to-Homeowner Program	Westside Future Fund, Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Police Foundation, Pulte Homes	This program involves the purchase and rehabilitation of existing properties to enable perpetual affordable	N/A	The Westside Future Fund recently purchased 51 properties for rehabilitation.

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Renter-to-Homeowner Program		homeownership opportunities.		
Job Training/Placement	Blank Foundation, Westside Works, Integrity CDC, Westside Future Fund, Construction Education Foundation of Georgia, Integrity Community Development Corporation, the Center for Working Families, Inc., Per Scholas, Metro Atlanta YMCA, and the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency	Westside Works, launched through the Westside Community Benefits Plan, provides workforce development and living wage job placement to residents in Atlanta's westside neighborhoods.	N/A	In its first year of operations, Westside Works placed 458 residents into full-time jobs, in the construction, culinary, nursing, and information technology fields.
EcoDistrict	University Community Development Corporation, City of Atlanta: Mayor's Office of Sustainability	Through the AVE EcoDistrict, the University Community Development Corporation and the City of Atlanta lead a range of sustainability and quality of life initiatives in Atlanta's westside neighborhoods (namely Atlanta University, Vine City, and English Avenue). The EcoDistricts certification program collects baseline and ongoing data in the categories of Place, Prosperity, Health and Wellness, Connectivity, Living Infrastructure, and Resource Restoration.	N/A	Anticipated outcomes include the restoration of Proctor Creek, the development of a multi-modal transit terminal, and the creation of new housing, education, and job opportunities.
Atlanta Heritage Owner-	City of Atlanta, Invest Atlanta	This deferred forgivable loan program, which	N/A	N/A

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Occupied Rehab Program		provides up to \$30,000 per household for health and safety repairs, facilitates owner-occupied rehabilitation for households making up to 60% AMI. Priority is given to seniors, military veterans, and disabled heads of households.		
First Source Hiring	City of Atlanta, Atlanta Beltline Inc., Atlanta Workforce Development Agency	Builders compensated with TAD bond proceeds must implement the City's First Source Hiring policy, which requires them to make their best effort to fill entry-level positions with residents from neighborhoods surrounding the Beltline (a register of people is updated annually by the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency).	N/A	N/A
Opportunity Zone/Jobs Tax Credit Program	Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Invest Atlanta	With the Jobs Tax Credit Program available in Georgia's Opportunity Zones, employers can earn state tax credits of \$3,500 if they create more than two jobs per year.	N/A	Ponce City Market (PCM) falls within an Opportunity Zone, and the income tax credit program has incentivized 80 businesses to make PCM their home.
Purpose Built Communities revitalization model	Purpose Built Communities, Grove Park Foundation, YMCA of Metro Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, KIPP Schools, Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyer's Foundation,	Neighborhood improvement in Grove Park was initially driven by the environmental improvement efforts of the Emerald Corridor Foundation.	The Grove Park Foundation joined the Purpose Built Communities network in order to carry out a more holistic community revitalization approach.	The accomplishments of Grove Park Foundation thus far include: securing funding for the construction of a new K – 8 academy, to be operated by KIPP schools; partnering with the YMCA of Metro Atlanta to build a new wellness and early childhood intervention

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Purpose Built Communities revitalization model	Emerald Corridor Foundation			center; collaborating with Callanwolde Fine Arts Center to boost arts education; helping Grove Park residents obtain pro-bono legal advice from the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyer's Foundation; and bringing Atlanta's "Soccer in the Streets" program to Grove Park
Anti-Displacement Tax Fund	Westside Future Fund, City of Atlanta	This protection is a property tax circuit breaker program in the Westside Overlay District, which essentially means that if the ratio of property taxes to household income rises above a certain level, the Westside Future Fund will cover the portion of property taxes that is unaffordable to the qualified households.	City of Atlanta is analyzing how to expand this protection across the Beltline Overlay District.	N/A
Project Labor Agreements	Atlanta Beltline Inc.	The Beltline Equitable Development Plan encourages employers who do not receive TAD funding to sign Project Labor Agreements. These are meant to ensure that employers pay rates that are comparable with prevailing wages.	N/A	The Atlanta Beltline Inc. has not documented the frequency of these agreements being used.
Chief Equity Officer	City of Atlanta	Previous Mayor Kasim Reed created this position on his Cabinet to advise on citywide equity issues.	N/A	N/A

2. Diversity Strategies

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Historic Preservation of Culturally-Significant Places	Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, the Atlanta Preservation Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation	HDDC used a “block-by-block” strategy to develop infill homes and restore existing properties without displacing the residents living in the Sweet Auburn Historic District. In the late 1990s, though, homeowners sold their properties to affluent newcomers for great profits.	HDDC quickly learned that affordability mechanisms were needed. They started placing covenants on the properties’ deeds, which set out rules regarding subsidies. The HDDC would provide these subsidies under the condition that they must be paid back if the home is sold within 5 years.	HDDC’s efforts have resulted in a more stable residential neighborhood. However, the once-thriving commercial corridor on Auburn Avenue is not what it used to be. In 2013, a nonprofit called Sweet Auburn Works incorporated as the entity that would lead the preservation-focused commercial revitalization process, including the strategic planning and the fundraising. In 2017, the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced its African-American Cultural Heritage Fund and its intention to open an office on Auburn Avenue.
Health Programming	Atlanta Beltline Partnership, Kaiser Permanente, grant recipients	Kaiser Permanente partnered with the Atlanta Beltline Partnership to launch a Westside Health Programming grant, geared toward boosting physical activity of residents living near the Westside Trail.	N/A	N/A
Areas of Opportunity	Atlanta Housing Authority	AHA created Requests for Proposals for affordable housing projects in low-poverty census tracts in the city of Atlanta as well as in the ten-mile extra-jurisdictional area outside the city limits.	Areas of Opportunity is a new initiative, but it can be argued that it is an iteration of AHA’s previous strategies.	N/A
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) hiring	Atlanta Beltline Inc., MARTA, GDOT	The Atlanta Beltline Inc.’s policy calls for at least 27% of contractors to be DBEs.	N/A	N/A

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) hiring		MARTA and GDOT also have similar policies.		
Reynoldstown Youth Work Program	Resources for Residents and Communities: Reynoldstown Youth Work Team	This workforce development program targets youth ages 8 – 14, with the intention of fostering responsibility. It pairs kids with senior citizens in the Reynoldstown community who need assistance with home upkeep.	N/A	N/A
Mixed-Income Housing	Focused Community Strategies (FCS)	FCS bought the Atlanta Stockade, which had previously been a prison, and converted it to affordable housing development called Glenwood Castle. Crime became a big issue, especially drug-related. FCS sold the property in 2015, as leader Bob Lupton concluded that “even with the best intentions, concentrated poverty does not work” (Pendergrast 2017). Before selling, though, he ensured all the tenants found other housing arrangements.	FCS started pursuing a new mixed-income model in South Atlanta, which involved rehabbing homes and selling them at market-rate, as well as building new affordable homes. FCS also converted an old liquor store to a thrift shop, bike repair store, and coffee shop.	From 2008 to 2017, the vacancy rate in South Atlanta decreased from 50 percent to 15 percent. Bike repair shop engages local youth, through a point system where kids can earn a bike by working at the shop. The thrift shop converted to Carver Neighborhood Market to fill a need for a healthy grocery option since the next closest grocery store was 3.5 miles away.

3. Democracy Strategies

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Atlanta's Neighborhood Quality of Life and Health Project	Georgia Tech Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development, City of Atlanta Office of Planning and Community Development, Georgia Department of Public Health: Office of Health Indicators for Planning, Atlanta Regional Commission, Center for Disease Control and Prevention	The entities listed to the left created an interactive map with various social equity indicators, at the geographic level of Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Units. On the website for the project, various resources are provided, and they are divided into: "Resources by Role," "Resources by Indicator," and "Resources by NPU."	N/A	This project created a great tool that is readable to a variety of audiences. With the map and accompanying resources, people in a variety of roles can learn about issues in their communities and take steps to overcome them.
Neighborhood Planning Units	City of Atlanta Office of Zoning & Development, Office of Housing and Community Development	Through twenty-five "neighborhood planning units" (NPUs), citizens have formal avenues to comment on land use proposals and influence decisions that will directly impact them. In many cases, the NPU is the first entity with whom a developer may propose a project and discuss the needed permits. Though NPUs cannot mandate anything, they are able to make recommendations to the developer that may facilitate the zoning approval process as the developer proceeds	N/A	N/A
Civic Dinners	Atlanta Regional Commission, Civic Dinners	Through this web-based platform, individuals can sign up to host a dinner with a specific conversation theme. Then, anyone who finds the events on the platform can sign up to attend the dinner, as long as there are still seats at the table—	N/A	N/A

Strategy	Responsible Agency	Description	Strategy Altered?	Outcomes
Civic Dinners		Civic Dinners recommends a total of six to ten attendees. The Civic Dinners platform also provides the host with a conversation design to facilitate the process. In addition, the host can choose to pay for additional consulting services such as marketing and post-conversation actions		
Atlanta Regional Housing Forum	Atlanta Regional Housing, Atlanta Community Food Bank	Quarterly themed housing meetings where stakeholders and citizens come together to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions.	N/A	These meetings have been recurring since 1988, so it can be inferred that the Atlanta community is invested in them.
Homeowner Empowerment Workshops	Atlanta Beltline Inc., Home Place Consulting	Free workshops to educate homeowners on their rights, property values, and tools at their disposal, whether they want to stay in their homes or if they wish to sell	Predatory buyers aggressively pursued purchasing naturally-occurring affordable housing after the Eastside Trail was built. In 2016, ABI sought to control this by offering Home Empowerment Workshops.	N/A
Resident Leaders for Equity	Partnership for Southern Equity, Annie E. Casey Foundation, NPU-V	Residents who apply and are accepted into the program will take part in a nine-month engagement and education series, where conversations will focus on racial equity, community building, identification of issues, and ideas for improvements in their neighborhoods.	N/A	N/A